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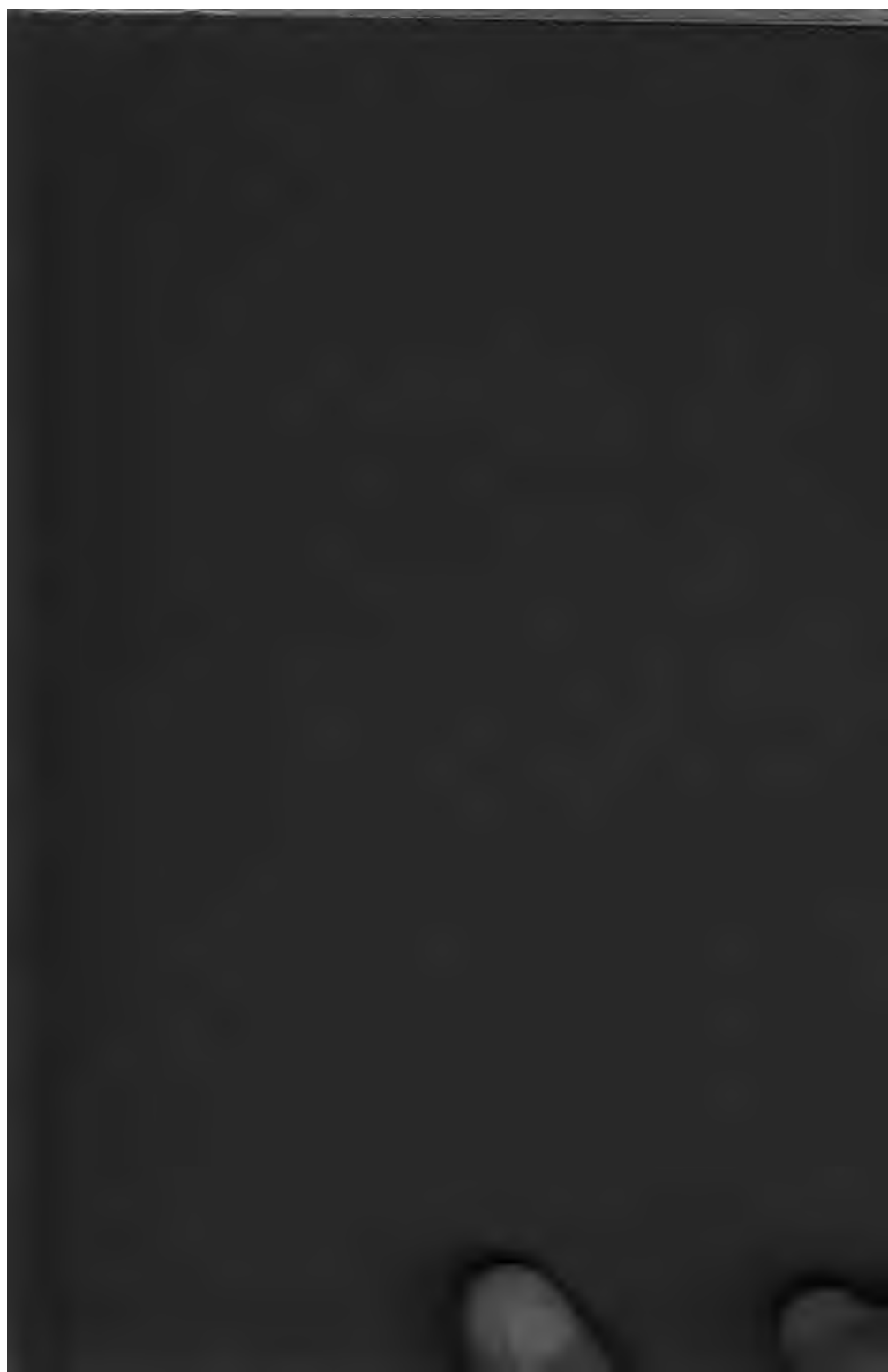
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With the writer's
compts
1891—

See pages 132-3.

THE HERMIT,

A POEM,

AND

MISCELLANEOUS VERSE.

+

By THOMAS NORTON.

+ *Thomas Best Woodward*
Hudsonik Bank
in Tewkesbury.
"I FOLLOW FAITH."

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE.

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THE HERMIT.

PART I.

WHAT ! SHALL IT BE NO MORE ? WHY, THEN——FAREWELL.

T H E H E R M I T .

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

The best of Good, the prime of human Sense,
Images godlike, faith's best evidence.

INHUMAN were the thoughts of men of old,
Who, by a kindred enterprise inflamed,
And mutual ardour, daringly first led
Their footsteps hither—stern forthwith upraised,
In the strong years of naked hardihood,
A people's parentage ; and taught wild nature
Submission,—made for service unforeknown.
Rude hearts had they, untutor'd ; Passion ruled
The rare and several notions of their wills
Despotic—Minds, unopen'd, unillumed,

Wherein no light save savage instinct burn'd—
Served but to feed an uncurb'd appetite
With license lawful, liberty unbound.

When, in the shaping of all outer modes,
(The faithful index of the soul's estate
And reflex motion of all inner being)—
Heart dominant, and self in self complete,—
Ungrew resemblance to that life within
And law of action—Mind unrecognized
As free ; scarce living ; helpful bondsman held,
The serviceable slave to every sense.

The rule of Heart it was in ignorance—
Fed only by that pale deceptive light
Which lives in reason with the unreveal'd,
Making a cruel empire in the soul.
Mix'd with an infant-manhood wonder-faith,
All own'd for law an impulse passion-ruled,
That in a blind sincerity wildly dealt
Blind justice ; in its fierce completion held
Strong honour ; mighty to propitiate

The season-anger'd gods, whose wrath was known
Thro' falling star, or whirlwind, or death-plague.

But, as the gradual dawn of opening day
Spreads its warm fingers o'er the sleeping world,
Kindles the face of nature, and brings forth
Soul utterance ; so gentle Knowledge came,
Alluring sense from its own ignorance,
And cruel enmity to kindlier ways
And gentler wishes—Mind subservient still,
Uprising slowly thro' rude effort towards
Emancipation : Heart and Mind as one
Brothers to be—in resolution thus
Evolving change, and time, and test of men.

So following down the centuries that roll'd
The growing purpose of a truth unseen,
Each gathering life and light, still dark to each,
And warring on each other, faith denied,
Or amity, love still unrecognized—
Till 'neath the fold of ripen'd circumstance,
(So shaping unseen necessary change

To prove the worth and being of a man)
The Spirit of emotion spoke within
That life were worthier, more acceptable
To the high God omnipotent, unknown,
Unseen, yet felt, and yearn'd for, if but led
In fellowship and peace for mutual good,
Exempl'd good-wards towards excellence.
A truce came gradual ; and the kiss of peace
Each tender'd to the other ; friendship grew,
Tho' cold at first, and barren, for each fear'd,
—So gave no confidence out from itself
Save in shows seemly—weakness following :
The strength of passion or the rule of pain
Must forfeit its stern yoke, and meeker power
Meant degradation or a broken will.

But the same Light which spake in earlier years,
In far-off lands, predestined above all—
Came hither ; reach'd all knowledge ; pierced it thro'
Into the vital whole and soul of life,
Glowing on all past twilit circumstance
That moved men's natures ; falling lightly here

A star-light on the surface ; there in deep
Absorbing effort raising up the whole
Into the likeness of the glorified.

Thus men saw in the mingling of Christ's 'love
With proof and knowledge gather'd, sweeter laws,
And modes, and purer happiness ; strength baptized
Into an honour unimpeachable,
That finds its virtue in the fact of truth
And power in willing unity. Gradually,
Between these moving principles within,
(Fear balanced by the visible evidence
Of good unrealized within the reach)
Heart yearning pure expanse, Mind seeking light—
A faith that bore the germs of honest fruit
In mutual aim and aid of each to each
Upgrew ; and kindly temper'd into love
These fellow faculties of life and hope.

And, when the years of Time fill'd in the growth
Of equal knowledge, shed an equal light,
(Bending necessity at every turn

To equitable service, balancing
Action in alternation fine and just)—
The clear unvain reflection of that Orb
Spiritual, that moves all motion in the soul,
Rose in the sensitive instincts of the will,
Colouring all new anticipations, aims,
With those sweet delicate tints that beautify
The life's expression—graduating thro'
Each opening disposition, true and pure.
Each felt for each, and look'd with a full eye
Of pure desire unsatisfied, to glean
The other's wants, work out the other's ends,
The better and the lovelier always deem'd.

Thus Man grew forward in all nobler parts,
The good within him ripening into good
Unseen before, unthought of, unforeknown
To be within the compass of himself,
Within his nature's mystery. A time appear'd,
When in the exercise of human prime,
—Love's fullness winding thro' all change begot
By knowledge in its true significance—

A life among the million lives was born
(Following the wake of few such gone before,
Self-known, and loved, God-imaged, sons of Truth)
Wherein the Heart and Mind so sweetly seem'd
Twins in the womb of impulse ; lay as one ;
Folded in one life and protecting love,
Took shape, being, motion, utterance akin ;
Born in the self-same shadow, cried alike,
And look'd and longed and wanted, grew and fed
From the same mother's milk—one in all ways.

And that life's youth in complete action left
No good unsought its understanding told,
Or the deep feeling of a noble heart
Uptender'd, in the daily exercise
Of filial duty, thro' each growing year.
Full manhood show'd the spirit of renown,
And wisdom of experience, with book-lore
Attemper'd finely, moulded into one.
Love fed on Reason, Reason fed on Love,
Hope was their offspring, Honour their reward,
While Faith, the soul's pure hunger, led the man.

I took this noble nature as a leaf
From out of the book of man, whereon to trace
In weakly characters and indistinct,
Some image of the vision of a past
Embodiment of manhood, dead and gone ;
Buried within the conflict of light minds
Impetuous ; or here and there discern'd,
But sparsely left, in various purpose held
The light and savour of society.
With trembling hand I sketch the lineaments
Of that full perfect face, and add the thought
That age and hard experience had indent,
And years of labour up the fact of life,—
To picture in the sequel——

P A R T I.

It is evening ; a soft warm loving glow
Fondles to sleep the landscape ; all is still ;
No sound speaks life ; the crannied daw is dreaming ;
Depastured flocks lie group'd ; a lonely ruin
On the low-breathing bosom of the hill
Leans shadow-folded ; the full brooding air
O'erwings her insect nurslings ; the shy moon
Creeps in upon the rivulet : all around
Wide are the arms of peace ; while twilight's mien
Endues the whole with pensive reverie.

Here, thro' the woods and gently sloping hills
That girt old Radnor's eastern boundary ;
And those romantic semblances the hour

Cunningly weaves in the brain, in fairyfold
Enclosing one another like the dream
Of love's own sweet reality, I wander'd.
All thought dissolved in fancy ; fancy too,
When weary of its panoramaed dream,
Became ethereal and diffused itself
In undefined emotion

But passing on thro' broken light and shade,
And many a cleverly cut intricacy
And ingenuity to save the foot
Old Time led thither, down a tangled brake,
I came upon a silver sleeping mere :
Lilies in sleep lay folded on its breast :
No breath of motion reach'd me, Nature slept.
Lingering again I sat and read the scene—
Autumn's rich colouring of beech and briar,
The faint glow tinged so coldly various :
The figure-looming shadows on the ground :
Now here, now there, a glowworm starring out,
Threading its pale light in among the moonbeams,
Fancy-work netting o'er the silver dew.

Anon, a toneless sound would come and fall,
The ripe fruit dropping from the orchard bough;
Then echo, caught from far remote unrest,
Would cause a dream-like sympathy, and pass.

A falling star shot thro' mid-heaven and died.
I rose, and softly meditating pass'd
Round the old ruin's venerable walls,
Visible relic of an opulent day—
Nigh roofless, slowly crumbling, here and there
A palsied rafter, pointing a dead age.
High tottering gables ivy-mantled lean'd
Into the twilight, whose black shadows lay
Motionless o'er the dead life underfoot,
A death-pall shrouding all until its change.
All seem'd a type of that which once had been—
The silent echo of a noble date
Buried in dim forgetfulness, a shade!
A voiceless memory still whispering :
For thro' a casement, where devoted maid
Oft look'd upon the starry night and dwelt
On love, the morrow's meeting and the joy

In a holy lingering contemplation ;
A moonbeam pass'd, illuming suddenly,
Like to a second sight revisioning,
A picture of some noble ancestor,
That clung together in a framing old
On the strong stone-work facing : and I gazed.
Images rose of the old bygone days
Of chivalry, high soul-built enterprise !
Beauty and knighthood, honour and true love,
Mingling in perfect service—each for each !
And in my brain there grew the picturing
In generous outline, of a simple faith
Won by pure constancy and outward acts
Of manhood's excellence . . . the wedding morn . . .
The courtyard throng . . . the glorious festive shout,
Mounting the wide acclamatory air,
Melting in joy ! . . . forth steps a war-worn knight,
Proved to the core . . now comes the bride . . all crowd
Her, the heart's ecstasy of womanhood !

A tremor woke me for the night was cold.
Turning half-sad to quit this hallow'd spot,

A lengthening shadow startled me, that crept
Up the near slope ; when with a noiseless tread,
Slowly an aged figure, weak and bent,
With tottering gait, a movement purposeless,
Grew in the dimness. Strange, he seem'd as one
Forgotten of the world, himself forgot,
A present-absent earthly-heavenly being,
A moving emptiness, a man devoid
Of half of manhood, so mysteriously
The part embodiment of two lives he moved.

We ask'd and answer'd of the present hour,—
And spoke of nature resting,—all the peace
Still hovering in between the toils of men,—
The death-in-life calm sleeping privilege
Of the pure night so lovely and so sad.
Then I of youthful ardour, honour, fame,
Of world renown, all evil conquering,
How that I loved the holy night which fed
My spirit with reflection's manna, made
Mightier for the morrow's need—but he,
Raising a hand that waved those dreams away,

In slow and solemn tones thus answer'd me :

‘ My Childhood laugh’d as merrily as thine,
‘ And blew as many bubbles of delight,
‘ My youth could bear as strong and honest arm ;
‘ Never did prospect body forth more fair.
‘ There came a curse across my path ; it shaped
‘ Its own damnation, for the end was good.
‘ I am old Time’s death-shadow !—see thou here
‘ The ruin’d epoch of my father’s age :—
‘ Mark me ! henceforth, that high o’erwatching moon,
‘ And those calm silent eyes of night shall view
‘ Another era in the souls of men.
‘ Give decent burial to the outworn Past,
‘ And shape your nation’s destinies anew.’

He ended, as a cloud eclipsed the moon—

My spirits droop’d, for in these solemn words,
Far off I felt I dimly recognized,
Like to a will-o’-the-wisp that rose and pass’d,
A mocking echo to my vanity.
‘ Give me more light ’ I cried ‘ O let me know
‘ The inmost truth of this deep mystery !

‘ Has Nature changed in Man, or Man in Nature ?
‘ Fed by some new delusion has he lost
‘ The balance of his being ? Is now the lamp
‘ Of intellect eclipsing ancient faith ? ’

That spirit-voice again came answering—

‘ Faith hath the sun for light, knowledge this moon,
‘ For every fickle shade, as now in part,
‘ Palsies her imitation of the day ;
‘ And those brief interludes of seeming truth
‘ Are but a woman’s gleams of pleasant pride,
‘ Forgetful that the little light she holds
‘ Comes from another and a greater source.
‘ Know thou, my son, these rushing years have borne
‘ The abortion of the prime original
‘ Of God-made man,—now nature’s womb forbears
‘ To hold her offspring,—subtle pains forego
‘ The ripe years of perfection, and deliver
‘ The premature pale shadow of pure fact.
‘ I am but part here ; it is mine to see
‘ Within the outer folds of human worth ;
‘ I live alone without the ways of men

‘ Who call all inward sights fanatic dreams.
‘ There’s a creation in my bosom fix’d,
‘ Visible to myself, that must partake
‘ Of an immortal nature ; for it sees
‘ Within all but itself, the ebb and flow
‘ Of human time, whatever doth pertain
‘ To this world’s history ; only is it blurr’d
‘ When by necessity of some desire
‘ This vehicle of sense must needs consent
‘ To some uncared-for action. I but wait—
‘ Alone thro’ these grey years to glean more truth
‘ In commune with this spirit ! Pass thou on—
‘ Of you I am not,—now, the unseen known
‘ And fellowship with the felt invisible
‘ Are my sweet converse—in my being are
‘ The mortal and immortal combating
‘ For each new utterance ;—leave me, fare thee well.’

Pondering these strange words I turn’d away,
And thro’ the woodlands sought my cottage home,
Bewilder’d, lost in meditation, till,
Among the crooks and turns that delved and wound

Like spirit windings thro' imagination,
I lost my way,—no light, no voice to hail.
Safely at last I hit upon the path ;
But ere I saw my cottage window-flame
Peer thro' the drooping autumn boughs, had made
A strong resolve to learn from book or pen
This strange man's lonely history :—at last,
Thro' heaps of buried gossip, tea-cup talk,
Old charms, brain probabilities, stray tales,
Pieced odds and ends of memory, I saw
Into the following shadow'd light of fact ;
Part the narration of his life and love,
Part the unwritten record of his mind.

Among those hills, a century ago,
Sir Gilbert Warden held an heirdom old,
Far-winding meadows, wide oat-ploughing lands—
And ride a fifty miles, a better Lord,
A heartier Squire had never own'd a sward,

Or got a cheering at a harvest home.
Bred to obedience, and development
From infancy and youth of every good
And culture of all manly qualities,
Long was he known and own'd, the county round,
A goodly type of England's gentleman.
Justice was steward to his rent-roll ; and,
Because high-handed honour dealt to all,
The daily outcome of a noble heart—
Experience, true attach'd outspokenness,
Duty in faith, right aid in honest will ;
All loved him as their own warm winter hearths,
And praised him as the light their county gave.

Daily he rose, as the awakening light
First touch'd the hill-tops' verge, and with its love
Enkindled the emotion of the dawn,
That like the offering of his own great heart
Rose as deep Nature's incense. First to horse ;
The morning's round to know the work of night,
Inspect the folded, prove the shepherd's word.
Perchance some cuckoo-lamb that overnight

Gamboll'd too late, was stiff, and needed warmth ;
Or ewe that shoulder'd overwealth of wool
Lay helpless in the furrow, could not rise
Without its shepherd. Then across the vale,
Down to the streamlet-meadow, where the herds,
Chewing the fresh cud of the morning, lay
Group'd in the steaming sunrise. Round them all,
Carefully seeking with long-practised eye
The sick, the heavy breathing whom the fogs
Had struck with cold—by hireling overlook'd—
Short fever-cough begun, a hectic bloom
Warmer than Nature's warmest in the eye.
Then to the hill-side where the ploughing team
Broke the June vetch-earth for the open sun
To mellow,—seed-bed for a winter's crop.
Would have the share sharp, the straight furrow clean,
The angle fine, each detail excellent,
Even to the last covering of the sown :
' Nature was prodigal to those who loved
' And cared for her, would ever recompense
' Completest touch of finish with more good
' And gift than hoped for. It had so been will'd.

And lastly home to morning prayer and feast,
Superior duties, social calls and aims.

So with each season, each one in its turn—

If autumn ; then the gathering harvest home :

If winter ; each one's weariness and want :

If spring ; the energy of arisen life :

If summer ; love and gratitude for all.

Thus life with him was fact, not pleasant fancy,
That into little purposeless designs,
Leisurely nothings, and complacent ease,
Breaks all the impulse in a gentle nature
Good, vain, allurable. Yet oft had he,
In the strong flushing of his earlier years,
When manhood first outstript capricious youth,
Down by the streamlet, in the open mead,
Well wrestled with his compeers, fallen or won.
And with his hawk, full often was he known
To cross the sleeping moat, ere flush of dawn
Tiptoed approach'd to touch the languid eyes
Of pale remembrance, conjuring the dream
Of storèd memory into wakefulness—

And slip across the orchard narrow path,
Down the bloom'd clover, thro' the spindling corn,
To where the marsh lands, slowly lessening,
Fed the wild heron, falconer complete.
But so it chanced, the way led by the Court
Of crippled Sir Goodyear, living now alone
Save one, a daughter, who, tho' sought, still kept
Herself unwed for his repose and peace.
When often fell he meditating how
Much better would the falcon fly if deck'd
With prettier plumes,—how dearer far the sport,
If Lady Anne would guide the silken string
And grace the booty,—she so womanly,
Fair too, and good, and sweet, and marriageable !

So touching the occasion with meet act,
Oft would he leave the beaten public way
For a dearer,—wander near the fragrant lawn,
Humming a love-song for the lady's ear.
Which catching some simple motioning within,
Oft made her think the fragrance of the dew
Charming, sweetest the flowers of early morn—

' 'Twas good for the bloom of the cheek besides
' Betimes to rise and gather the health of dawn.'
So met they by some mutual accident—
He, wondering why that form so delicate
Arose so early,—she, and did she think
Some novel impulse must exist to lead
So fine a sportsman from the public way
Direct to the marshes ? tho', perchance he too
Came only as he loved the flowers' sweet breath,
A peep at the beauty ?—*yet*, ' to own his love,
' Would it not prove the whole and soul of life ? '

Love wound together in one holy bond
Of sacred use and mutual sympathy
These two ; a happier pair, faith-led, ne'er lived—
She holding woman's worth to lie within
The compass of her home and homely cares,
The daily use of sweet suggesting love,
And guiding deed of active sympathy.
And he, as years pass'd on, and duty grew
With manhood, led the local public ways,—
But seldom left his own to mingle in

The fancies and the plausibilities
Of the great city's notion-motion life ;
Holding, tho' some had call'd him rude of brain
And ignorant of finer fashion'd modes—
Right action with an honest heart and arm
—Free from the quirks of intellect, the need
Occasion wanted ; and so stood his own,
Teaching in practice all he loved in faith.
When, thro' a worthy, long, and useful life,
Harvest succeeding harvest, summer spring,
And then a golden evening of decline
Into the glow and glory of full age ;
Rich in the promise of a goodly son,
Rich in the wealth of hallow'd exercise,
Rich in his county's love and reverence ;
One quiet summer's evening, unawares,
As the sun touch'd the brow of passing day,
A swift emotion like the joy of birth
Thrill'd thro' him ;—and it bore his voice away.

Gilbert, then ten years old, an only child
Was left ; and onward thro' his boyhood grew

A noble lad ; who loved the open sky,
Who ransack'd every hollow of the woods,
Who read heroic tales of knightly deeds,
Then made his puissant plans, and built his schemes.
Sometimes, alone, look'd out on life, and wonder'd,
Pictured its hopes, and venerated men.
But from his birth his mother had so train'd
His deeper thoughts to God—belief in things
Real tho' unseen—that now a stripling grown
Of fifteen summers, all the truth she taught,
Working like leaven in his inmost soul,
Shaped out the lad, and ruled his daily life.

Years have flown by ; and in their simple joy
Have pass'd his boyhood's days for evermore.
His mother too is gone ; ten years ago
A call came for her, as she sat alone
One winter's midnight, counting the lonely hours,—
Wondering he stay'd abroad more than of yore—
The low-burnt light rose a broad flicker, fell ;
Gently she droop'd asleep ; and, ere he came,
In peaceful slumber pass'd her soul away.

Alone, unloved, life-ignorant, sincere,
And earnest as the soul of Nature's self
To work the purpose of the Eternal Will,
And watching for those mystic gleams which give
An insight into future destiny,
Now would he meditate in quietude ;
And in such calm and peaceful reverie,
Far from the hum of men, among his own
Broad fields, and quiet woodlands, and clear streams,
His conscience seem'd a key-board to the hand
Of gentle spirit-fingering ; whereon
The notes of thought so exquisitely touch'd
Made one pure consonance within the soul,
Moving all hope to universal love.
Soon came wide thoughts of life, new hopes and aims,—
To live for God in present upright use
And exercise of every faculty
Discover'd, that might lead to good or gain,
Thro' one pure service work'd out to its end.
To try to learn, by faith, and constant stay,
And watching for the light, wherein the truth
Of Faith, dismember'd by unfaith in man,

Made parts of one communicable whole,
Again might live in universal hope,
One law and license to humanity.
And for himself, so long this life might prove,
To take each coming day as 'twere the whole,
And live it as the last, the final act
Accountable within the ken of God,
And knowledge of the truth among all men.
So will'd he in his solitude, then rose—
We follow thro' the deed and test of all.

For, in the years just pass'd, his way foreseen
To be among the true nobility,
By nature fitted, wealth, necessity
Of generous ardour, and a noble aim—
He sought the nation's first repository
Of bygone wisdom ; what forefathers taught
Of Faith, and sage philosophers held true
In the grey vista of a calmer age :
Pass'd thro' the twilight of first ignorance
Into the brain-pride of succeeding years :
Noting wherein each differ'd from the last ;

Each altering the errors gone before ;
All tending forwards to the one wide truth.
Finally, in the contest of opinion,
(Though often held a creedless visionary)
Took sympathy with all ; in all he saw,
Or seem'd to see, some honest ray of truth,
That absolute in meditation fed
Some single fancy that ne'er lived alone :
Yet, in these narrow images of fact,
Serving an universal interest,
The silent feet of knowledge moving on
In a mysterious motion that expell'd
All error'd past into eternity.

There is within the nature of a man
Ever progressive change of circumstance,
Wherein can rise and exercise itself
New will-born individuality.

Seven years have pass'd. The bud towards the bloom
Of May is softly opening ; all is joy.
Now where the honeysuckle's tendrils clasp
The fragrant grotto in the garden wall,
Lonely for years in its sweet loneliness—
Are lingering two, Sir Gilbert and his wife,—
Mary, an orphan girl he found alone
And loved before he knew it.

Thus they met.

'Twas Easter week ; the Parliament had risen
For the recess ; Sir Gilbert homeward rode.
His county had well chosen him their voice
In the nation's council—mainly to advance
One special measure for the general good :
' Man before money as the worthier,
' Greater security to public weal—
' Teach but the many, and the end would prove
' Re-action good-wards towards unity.'
So had he spoken ; and now slowly pass'd
Back to his county—partly sad at heart,
For ' was his home not lonely ? surely there

‘ Should love be ? must it *ever* be so lone ? ’

When on the third day as he near’d the hills
Which stand between two counties in the west,
Night gather’d thick with heat—three miles lay yet
Over the hill-top ere he reach’d the Inn
In the valley—and he spurr’d to reach it ere
Heavily broke the tempest overhead.

Galloping up the slope he reach’d the Cross
Centering the four highways—there slacken’d rein,
Lost momentarily in the half light and dark :
‘ Which was the way ? might Heaven point out the right
‘ At such an hour ! ’ so praying struck straight on—
When as the lightning flared, beneath his feet
Lay a dark figure vivid in the gleam
That broke again, and lo ! sharp, full and clear,
Flash’d out a Raphael’s angel-figure bent
Over her mercy, thro’ her yellow hair
Kindling a spiritual glory that hung round
Salvation-like, the grey head at her breast.
And ere he well could ask himself the cause,
The *why* of this, the old man faintly spoke,
Murmuring a broken blessing on them both,

And ceased : when as they twain together knelt
And pray'd ' this friendless life or death might live
But as He will'd who made it ' life had ceased.
So then they rose together, together bore
The body to its resting-place, and passed.

And when he spake out from himself, and begg'd
Leave might he guard her homewards, she had told
Her orphanage ; how that she lived alone
In simple charities—her guardian near—
Had never known her parents ; some averr'd
Both died about her birth—she held it true.
And when he ventured ' Wherefore didst thou come
' To do this work of mercy ? ' she had made
Him wonder at her answer. ' It was Spring,
' A summer's evening just three years ago,—
' When in her chamber, as she knelt alone
' In prayer—all calm without—a Vision rose ;
' Brightly and clear before her conscience shone
' A picture ; in the foreground stood herself,
' Clad in the simple garb of sisterhood,
' Doing the service of God's ministrant.

‘ And as she gazed a voice came, and she heard,
‘ Sweetly monition’d ‘ Do thy diligence
‘ Herein, and I will bless thee thro’ thy years
‘ Of singleness, and bring thee to thy joy.”
She ceased : but still he spoke not, dared not look,
Beneath that mystery each strangely felt
Unspoken. Love was there before the word ;
For there had come the contact of two souls
Born of one kind, the complement of each
Felt in the other—love born not of the lip,
But the mute utterance of the part divine.

Now came betrothal in the glow of life,
The glorious passage of a mutual love,
The breath and taste of immortality ;
Before whose being all a poet’s dreams
Seem fancy, dwindle into nothingness,
Fade, and become but the unbodied form,
The soul without the substance—soul indeed,
Yet pulseless image to the bliss itself ;
The what has been, and may be, to what *is*.
Now the communion of two souls in one,

The sacred hour of rapture, and the bliss
Of interchange of hope, and inmost dream
Of holy aspiration—life indeed !
And ‘ was not love a victory ? Give a man
‘ A woman’s love worthy his greatest self
‘ And what could foil him ? ’—then, that sweetest voice,
In ecstasy of answer ; ‘ Woman’s all
‘ Is sympathy of her best self in man.’

Erelong these happy two were man and wife,
And life began in earnest. Now each day
As one they daily met ; whether the want
Lay in the simple deed of homely act,
Light doing for each other, or abroad—
The upward culture of the neighbourhood,—
The general need of all who lived without
Their comforts, who were part of them and theirs
To care for,—each day nurtured with the love
Hourly that breathed its spiritual atmosphere,
Its purification and sweet sustenance,
To every thing and each one holily,
Unmarr’d, unhinder’d, thro’ the changing year.

Season succeeded season ; yet to them
Came there no falling leaf or angry winter,
For those slight waverings that disturb and fume
A weakling, in the daily homely rounds,
Touch'd but the forehead of his energy
Of mind-will—passing a transparent shade.
All was a blossoming spring that bears no blight
On the fair bosom of its smiling beauty,
But with the dewy morning's freshening flush
Pours out a mellower harmony of song,
And shows a richer sparkle in the cheek
Of its deep loveliness than the past has known.
Even as a woodland brook flow'd on the Time ;
Now frolicking in sweet laughter with a ray,
Now sparkling in the sunshine of pure joy,
Now resting in rich covert, warmly full,
Then steadily gliding thro' the open mead.

But, as the poetry of the human soul
Rises, bespeaks itself, and passes out,
Leaving the creature it awhile inbreathed
Only the creature of earth, with sense and wants

And duties of endurance ; so now, erelong,
(After two years of quietness and peace)
Moving within beliefs of thinking men
Who mould a people's feeling, make their hope,
And fashion out Opinion for an age,
Came anxious fears. For notions were abroad
Of many coming changes—' Man,' 'twas said,
' Had found out fuller truths of everything ;
' New modes for thought, new ways for life, new faith.
' Philosophy had solved the soul of things.
' Old customs were effete ; past generations
' Lived only in the twilight of the truth ;
' Knew but a fragment of the fact of life ;
' Were children to the knowledge of these days.
' Old forms must be remodel'd ; laws conform'd
' To science ; social modes re-organized,
' Cast in an ampler mould of liberty.
' Old faiths were dead ; Knowledge had now evolved
' Belief itself into self-evident law :
' Nature and Man remain'd ; and these were one,
' Born out of nothing and eternity.

For no man's life is easy, or devoid
Of that which proves him—proof to stand or fall
In self-election, this the all he knows,
All else God's ruling—erelong so arose
Test of obedience. Dwelling over-much
He may have been upon the varied forms,
The many subtle ingenuities
That crowd the brain of life ; or mostly on
The World's great canons—' *present* prime main Chance,
' Fact before theory ever questionable ;
' Godhood now ! leave all dim phantom hope
' To faint at heart ; future will clothe itself,
' Turn out a second present, no one doubts,
' Save the fond fool or coward visionary.
' Depend upon it life's no sapient dream,
' But object-present to the bodily eye ;
' Each man makes his own heaven, each but sees
' His own wants pictured in the mirror-glass.
' Of Faith you ask ? we understand it well—
' A woman's dream ! a priest-craft spun to death !
' A hocus-pocus, dilettante deck'd,
' Poor mortals truckle in a sickly hour !

‘ Of Duty ? ah ! well that we also know—
‘ Don’t rob your neighbour openly, nor touch
‘ His young wife’s honour else than with your eye ;
‘ Be prudent where’s a motive, *you’re* its worth,
‘ Look to the interest, *that’s* the motive’s end.
‘ And what of Charity ? well, come, you see,
‘ Since all’s a joke, just do the thing you need
‘ Whereby to figure well ! ’——

Again, there lived

A sect of faithless men, who long had mused
Intently on their navels to discover
How Matter made them ; what the secret law
That womb’d intelligence, and gave due birth
To thought—progression of material law :—
Who, in this devil-worship were at last
Rewarded ; grew to feel and see and know
How friction begat instinct, instinct soul,
And soul return’d to feed the fires of light.
Whereat these Law-gods, Blind-seers—what you will—
Rejoicing in their wisdom, forthwith sought
To throw the world ; on one huge altar-pyre,

Raised to the mammon-god Humanity,
Consume all old world-notions, misbeliefs,
All phantom hopes of imbecility,
Make one great sacrifice, and light the Age,
A holocaust to Superstition, passed.
So great their power, their influence over men,
That not a few forsook the light of faith
Straightway, and grovel'd with them in their dark
Material vision,—doubting any soul.
And many more half-fail'd, among them, he
Whose life we follow,—‘ was there any God
‘ Beyond the force in Nature ? ’—doubting thus,
Probing himself to find the truth of it,
—The infinite comprehension writ within
The finite, in one hour eternity—
Question'd himself alone :—

‘ Can these be true ?

‘ Hath man upon this earth a destiny
‘ Fix'd as the eternal laws of nature's self ?
‘ Or doth an inward motion inward breathe
‘ But the outcome of self-essence, self alone,

‘ Unshaped like air, till self’s own finger turns
‘ To mould and motion ? well, but name the self ?
‘ A Time-intelligented animal ?
‘ Nature’s evolvment thro’ Time’s heritage ?
‘ But law-begotten matter of matter’s law ?
‘ Instinct, can it be quicken’d into Mind ?
‘ Are we no more than creatures of a power
‘ Which hath no origin in life itself—
‘ Blind Force alone ? Can Force originate,
‘ Inform, sustain, direct ? Can it make Mind ?
‘ For Mind is purpose, Force is only power.
‘ Purpose, whence comes it then, the soul of all ?
‘ Can it originate in that which hath
‘ Neither its part nor element ? If not so,
‘ Purpose must be of purpose from the first ?
‘ True, but whence came that first ? If no known power
‘ Is it, or made it, it must be some cause
‘ Yet undiscover’d, or a self-evolved
‘ Centre of all things ? Ah, poor little mind !
‘ Here are you foil’d !—you are but the thing made !
‘ Canst read the That which made thee ! . . . Could
Man know all,

‘ Have nothing left whereon to feed the soul,
‘ Would he not sink into the animal ?—
‘ Curse the false teaching of a doubting age
‘ That makes brute-beasts of us instead of men
‘ Faithful and noble ! for I see in part,
‘ Grant but a God, I grant the word-reveal’d,
‘ Christ, life, all else, nay immortality !
‘ And to deny a God, then am I bound
‘ In the same breath to say I am but beast !
‘ I see the lie now, yes, I see it clear,
‘ For since I *am*, verily God *must* be,
‘ And I the more than beast, so God than me. . .
‘ So from the finite to the infinite
‘ I catch one glimpse of truth. . . Yet life remains
‘ The same, and I must live it.—O to know
‘ The truth, and never doubt it to the end !
‘ Is there no sequence in the laws of life
‘ That like a golden chain binds earth to heaven,
‘ From out of which all service emanates
‘ In its own order, law supporting law ?
‘ In exercise of whose embodiment
‘ Each step is nobler, higher in a man,

‘ More kin to godlike in his own esteem—
‘ And thus self-worthier, worthier of that Cause
‘ Incomprehensible ? ’ ‘ God humble me ! ’

Does He whose idea creation is
Punish divergence with meet temporal ill,
Wherein the soul, changed in some element,
Regains faith’s focus, pre-own’d recognition ?

Seven years have pass’d. The pain of broken trust
Has died away. A cheerful faith renew’d
Re-animates the man. Old trials borne
Live only in the memory as a dream
Half-realized. Husband and wife have known
Life’s joys and cares. A little daughter came
With the first snowdrop of their second spring,


And grew a spiritual sunbeam round their love
With her light laughter and bright innocence.
Another also came, but this one went,
Quietly died upon its mother's breast.
And Mary, knowing again her time was near,
Had ask'd the prayer of Hannah, for she yearn'd
To bear a son, 'be with this child, O God,
I dedicate to Thee,' but ever since
A fixed presentiment possess'd her mind
That her own life was reckon'd for the child's.
Wherefore she had much question'd with herself
About her worth, her merit in God's sight,
And more than once a kind of secret light
Came vision-like, and made things known to her.
And Gilbert, for he grieved to see her sad,
Daily had striven in all ways to recall
The old bright love and saintly happiness;
Yet could not ; nor could fathom half her thoughts,
Still ignorant of their cause, or coming change.

'Twas August ; in the heavens the harvest moon
Stood in the fullness of the noon-day heat ;

And as they walk'd together, hand in hand,
Down the beech-avenue that dipp'd and rose
Straight to the summit of the neighbouring hill ;
Gilbert, still grieving for her, lightly said :
' What say you to my thought, O virtuous Queen,
' To give the tenantry a holiday
' About his birth-time, should we have an heir,
' And make high merriment, such as of old
' Rang thro' these avenues with great events ?
' Were it not pleasant to revive once more
' The hearty spirit of the olden cheer ?—
' Share you my project, sweet one, or say nay ? '

Quickly she answer'd ' Aye, O let it be !
' How shall I joy to hear come thro' my window
' Voices of merriment, and happy bells !
' And he, our babe, my own, I fancy it,
' Will laugh the brighter for the pleasure borne
' To those about us,—who will love him too ! '

She paused there ; for the gladness of new life
Caught up the coming utterance of her soul,



Raising it above speech into sweet wonder.

Then walking silently a little while,

She ask'd to rest ; and seated, looking up

Among the branching trees yet summer green,—

Saw the development and golden change

Of autumn's growing ripeness ; and as she saw,

Changed by the mystery within which moves

Kindred feeling to the visible growth

Without—question'd herself, yet half-aloud :

' What is the growth in woman ? Can she know

' Her progress ? mark the seasons of her soul's

' Growth toward God ? the purpose He ordain'd ?

' How know it ? where is woman's outward rule

' Whereby she can compare a present self

' With past demerit ? feel her progress sure ?—

' For man there's action ; he can prove the past

' By putting side by side the deed in hand

' With that remember'd ? Is it woman's law

' Only to grow in faith and love ? to weave

' Thro' the long weariness and want in life

' A sweet endurance ? be the difficult part

' Of patient stay and comfort to the end ?

‘ And leaving all the outward, live for all
‘ The *felt*, the unseen wanting ; so approve
‘ God’s will in making her ? . . . I know no more.
‘ Yet for myself, O weak one that I am !
‘ I feel no longer *present* ! only now
‘ A link in time between a coming hope
‘ And past remembrance ; all my will seems merged
‘ Into a passive yea of that to be.
‘ Must I forego ! . . .

That moment overcome

By her own effort to discern the truth,
She stoop’d ; covering her face ; and seem’d to weep.
When Gilbert who lean’d musing whilst she sat,
Counting the day’s age on a sun-dial near,
Turning as she falter’d—saw, sprang to her side,
Knelt and implored that she would tell him all,
Begg’d her to speak ; and lastly, playfully claim’d
Wifely allegiance to his command.

Then Mary raised her head, tho’ turn’d away,
Fearing to speak her thoughts ; yet ask’d in turning
Sweetly her face to him ‘ A secret think you ?


‘ Something to tell my husband does not know ?
‘ No, he knows all, save that I may not tell.
‘ Yet why not ? we are one : and woman’s fears
‘ Are man’s clear reason.—I will ask the truth.
‘ Name me those thoughts which live within the mind,
‘ Ruling us often, yet are so removed
‘ From poor low words, that even if we will’d
‘ We could not speak them ? Are they fancies only ?
‘ Merely illusions of a passive brain ?
‘ Or very truths ? ’

Then Gilbert gravely answer’d,
(Seeing not her purpose) ‘ Thoughts are always true
‘ Which generate unbidden in the mind ;
‘ False only when blind will originates
‘ Without directing soul-speech :—Conscience knows ;
‘ Conscience is truth, and errs not.’

Suddenly

She rose ; droop’d in his arms ; one instant gazed
Mutely upon him—half hysterically cried :
‘ Then are my hopes too true, my fears in vain !

‘ O kiss me darling ere I go away !
‘ O press me closer yet a little while !
‘ I still am yours ! yours tho’ for ever ! mine
‘ Are you ! yet calm me : listen while I tell
‘ My all, and then am silent—hear me now.
‘ Long had I wish’d a son, and fed my hope,
‘ Nay, dwelt upon my coming beauty much,
‘ Pictured him to myself when all alone,
‘ And felt so glad, and nursed my little pride.
‘ Till fearing all my wish might prove a dream
‘ I knelt one night to God,—ask’d Him to grant
‘ My one desire ; when, verily as I pray’d,
‘ Acted my will in asking, I saw all—
‘ The wrong, the folly, nay the sin of it :
‘ Wrong in the wishing what I should await,
‘ Sin in the asking what I needed not. . .
‘ Yes, at that very moment, full and clear
‘ Before my naked conscience stood the truth.
‘ Had I not pray’d, I saw I had not sinn’d
‘ In wishing only ; wishes are no more
‘ Than idle fancies if they are not ask’d. . .
‘ Yet had I known, I would not so have done !



‘ Can that be sin we do in ignorance ? . .
‘ If so, our ignorance it is to blame,
‘ And not ourselves. But now I see *all* clear,
‘ Now you have plainly shewn that conscience knows.
‘ To ask for that we need not, even tho’
‘ For love or good, foregoes God’s one intent :
‘ We wrong God so doing, reaching for that best
‘ Which in due time He will obtain for us :—
‘ Nay more, we sin ; for surely it is sin,
‘ Petitioning for that which would prevent
‘ The mystery of His development.
‘ True prayer is asking for our needs alone,
‘ All that will better us, and those we love ;
‘ When for our faith therein, there surely come
‘ Changes and blessings we may not foresee,
‘ Moulding our natures ever to the end.’

The sky is calm and beautifully clear,
And not the pulse-like waver of a breath
Whispers its melody to the listless leaf.
It seems a pause in Nature, yet no pause

But death-like silence ; and a little cloud
Scarce visible in the palpitating glow
Of summer ripeness, is still growing up
Over the summit of the distant hill,
Beyond where, faintly stretching, dips the sea
Into eternity. And as it grew
With twilight and with shadow into eve,
There came a hollow wind that fill'd the trees
With anxious moaning, and at intervals
A broad flame issuing lit the eastern sky ;
And later, as the day wore, all the change
Broke from few whispers into fretful calls.

When Mary hearing, apprehensively,
A gentle tremor closing on her smile,
Said, with that voice which always moved anew :
‘ I think this is the long sweet summer’s end,
‘ The long sweet summer we have loved so much ;
‘ I could have wish’d one month more, so our babe
‘ Might be a summer’s offering unto God,
‘ And you might have no fears or pain for me.



‘ Still I am yours for ever, you are mine
‘ For ever and for ever, come what may ! ’
When verily as they clasp’d together there,
With arms that wove each other into one
And all the glory of two souls in one,
Love in one bond of excellence—they seem’d
As those of Eden in their holiness
And first-born beauty, human life complete.

Yet there their union ends. O Mystery
Of absent-fellowship, of unknown why !
For thro’ that night, while the dove could not brood,
And all the vales, the woodlands and the hills
Rang with a pain’d unrest, rending the dark ;
And while heaven’s voice of deep outspoken wrath
Struck every hollow of the firmament,
Denouncing some new ghastly evil born
Abroad upon the forehead of the world,
Came Good to trample on the neck of it.
For at that midnight hour her babe was born,
Continuous link from light-producing womb

In death's perception, death born into life !
Life, ere the natural saw the exigence
And crying embryo in the throes of the world—
Death, in but God's completion——

PART II.



INTRODUCTION.

The best of Good the world hath ever seen
Hath by the most of Evil proven been.

IN the full manhood and the prime of Time,
Faith's ripeness, one life, half-proof of the world ;
And ere declining years slowly had drawn
The marrow from the spirit's nobleness,
And sapp'd that magnanimity which glows
Round a great heart's deep utterance ; a Voice,
From whence the salutation of the soul
Receives unspoken answer, the unknown known,
Came in the mould and being of high Man
Renew'd, redeem'd, his excellence pourtray'd,—
Christ's glorious self, whose practice made all good

Herein forespoken—Wide proclaim'd a code
Of love, unself, sincerity in one ;
Leaving to Man's own virtue to discern,
(Save a broad warning, Evil's subtlety)
Their opposites in fine similitude ;
Wherein arose temptation, and the test
To prove him, knowing good, discovering ill.

And centuries roll'd—and Knowledge grew, and gave
Thought a far ampler vision ; slowly saw
Into the secret motion and the being
Of things material,—how progression shaped,
From when the dark and silent yearning void
First took creation ; presence beautiful,
Subtly convolved, and exquisite in all.

But tasting soon the sweets of self-applause,
The wonder-worship from another's eye
More simple in its dim simplicity ;
That Light which erst the complete soul had orb'd,
Illumining Man's nature to the core,
Received unnatural iridescent change,

Tints from the petals of unfolding pride
Unrecognized. And thus that nobler life
Of love, without subordination's aid,
Of help fulfilling service, making it,
Of faith forgetting a suspicion's being ;
Stain'd in its source and primal origin,
Grew in the duplicate of the truth, deceit
Unpluck'd had blossom'd as a luring weed.

For Sin had watch'd the birth of federal truth,
This new-created beauty, second Man ;
And brooding (bound at its development)
How best to feign its image good to all,
Saw, in the sweetness of a self-esteem,
Propp'd by suggestions future, harvest huge,
A second fall to thousands second blind.
So in the ear of faith he forward breathed
Delicious counterfeit, that swam thro' sense
And mind and soul an opiate, and fill'd
The fallow-man and wayward with strange dreams
Of ill forgotten, and completed good,
Completed Self, and self in self complete.

'T was sweet to own forgetfulness of good
Indebted ; freedom false ; and sweeter yet
Those secret whispers of a voice within
Motioning to a godhood in the soul,
Essence supreme in nature : whence outgrew
A lower earthlier sentiment, that unwed
Seeded the sacred fold and will within,
Polluting manhood, filling with foul fumes
The brain of sweetness and the brow of beauty ;
Shaping the utterance and the hope of each
To the vain gloss of bright reality.

And centuries roll'd——and Man impurer grew
In the blind ignorance of a seeming knowledge,
Heap'd by a palsied vision, that ever fed
Its rank appetite on the visible form,
The sensuous beauty of created being ;—
Failing to seek all other light without,
Forgetting the invisible life within—
Sought semblance and not faith, false and not true,
Self-gratified, self-satisfied, and full,
Rose dark in his own shadow, and withdrew

In a free-making all himself from God.


Nature unaided doth inoculate
Good into evil, evil into good,
And like to Man, untended doth produce
False growth from rectitude, error from truth.
When now uprose within the illused mind,
(Neighbour to honest worth and faithfulness)
A new creation, Falsehood's speech had framed ;
Whose outer form and life embodiment
Was Covetousness, activity disguised,
Whose daily action among fellow-men
Was Competition, call'd the only mode
Of living motion in a knowing age.
And last, to give appearance to the thing,
And gloze the monster lie with fair aspect,
'Twas clothed in soft beseeming delicateness,
Gay colours of Deceit, with cunning wiles
Seductive, amorous, and plausible
As fiction's woven fancy, intertwined
With music meet for heathendom's divine
Approval, a Circean-Apollo's note

Of blind intoxication thro' the life,
Benighted in some sweet fallacious dream,
Of weakness, trembling 'neath smooth excellence
Of fallen strength——

P A R T I I.

Across the hills about six leagues away
O'er the waste warren where the nettle blows ;
Uncultured, in high desolateness, lone,
Removed from all of human comfort, lay
Sir Wildred's farms and famish'd tenantry ;
Who lived on oaten bread and ignorance,
And never saw the light, save twice a year,
Of other homes and faces, at the fairs.
He, Sir Wildred, half-cousin to Sir Gilbert,
Sole heir to his estates had he no issue,
Came thro' his lineage at unnoted date
From a broken branch of the same parent tree,
Whose growth aye lean'd towards earth, aye loved the dust,
Grovel'd for years 'mid common weeds of men.

Nay, an old legend in the spirit dwelt
Of valid tradition, that his forefather
Who got thro' insincerity largess
And bounty from a faithless tottering King,
Who first upraised his line to magnate-height,
Bolster'd him well into the rich world's eye,
Had suckled all his life a covetousness,
As Ahab's ; and that lastly in his prime,
Pride blinding prudence, cunning and old wile,
Had ventured by a well-spun fraud to gain
A neighbour's vineyard, near his own bare hills ;
When what seem'd wispish chance brought out the whole ;
Toppling he fell, was trampled in the dust
That he had loved and lick'd for many a year.
Likewise it said some strange satanic art
Had stamp'd the conscience of his body's fruit,
Who came and went, and left a legacy
Of some develop'd curse to theirs and all.
That next his son, of a good mother bred,
Hoped well in youth's bud when the will was pure,
Promised his green ambition soon to purge
All stain at manhood from the family ;



But coming out upon a world that show'd
Homes loveless, with cold money-glowing hearths,
Facile temptation, gentle blasphemy,
Pale fornication dyed in ecstasy ;
Vanity, a draped goddess worshippèd
On the heart's altar taken from the Lord ;
Largess to ridicule, wit intoxicate,
Each noble trait in nature parodied,
Made a sweet jujube for each sense-sick fool
Whose brains in balancing would kick his heels
And yet outweigh his folly—tasting all,
The under subtle working of the sense
Prick'd the thin life-blood from his better purpose,
And fed the bud to blossom all that curse
Within him, greed and prurience withal.
When scarce before two headlong years had writ
A hue and cry upon his countenance
In marks of sore incontinence, that speak
Mute caution and contamination to .
The eye and thought of purity, he had wed
A courtezan, and deeply steep'd each pulse
In the rank verjuice of foul rottenness.

A son was born.—Wildred they named the child.
The parents died. When as the boy grew up
Untutor'd from the shaping of that nature
Their joint blood gave him—tutor'd well in it—
Beneath that awful world-enduring law
That in progression of all exercise
Shapes out its own inherence, he arose
As Sin's embodied spirit—heart and soul
Cold as the veinless dark ; lit with the light
That scintillates at falsehood's friction—with
A tongue so voluble and well veneer'd,
Could sew a lie in velvet, or divert
All pure and unsuspecting to its end.
Withal, so mix'd his words and trick'd his acts,
What time his life could hold its secret course,
And keep a superficial fancy smile
In the quick pocket of necessity
For wile and service, in his right hand lay
The ready serpent sunning of the world.
So many years he came and went unknown
With outward seeming wise and beautiful.
Till they who bordering on his country home

Saw the base touching of his onyx'd hand,
Poor weazen widow in weed-beggar'd farm,
Scant homesteads tottering in decrepit age,
Let slip report ; which Rumour spread, and soon
(The gloss of falsehood wears and shows the truth)
Hints follow'd of his earlier history ;
How that wild losses had rack-rent the land,
'Torn out the life-roots from its barren breast ;
That at the door of his means sat haggard Death
Ringing a debtor's calling thro' his dreams,
Once reaching in a finger, touch'd his brain
Magnetic to its mover 'gan to frame
And body in the vision of his soul
A ghastly image of forgotten shames,
With a fiend's frenzy forcing into One
All past remembrances and deeds of ill.
Starting, unseen, spell-terrified, he fled
Under the cover of the sleeping night
To nearest anchor—loosed, ere flush of dawn
Touch'd every forehead with a call to work,
Had reached a safer shore, had shaken off
The vision, all his owings, and was gone.

O it were sweet, yes! sweeter than the song
Of evening warbler or of maiden's breast,
Or those unspoken indicants that reach
The faithful lonely spirit—sweeter than all!
Could but the heart of man of fellow-man
Sing a full song, give instance of his deeds,
His youth, his love, his faith, his fellowship;
And find not in that song if faithfully
Outgiven, even the echo of a tone
That came by Evil! not a note once breathed
Thro' impure contact----

Yet the fact runs on—
He came again, but three years after, pass'd,
A shrunken echo of his former self,
Within the homes of Virtue, ah! there touch'd,
God knows, but with an unstamp'd hand that lack'd
The flesh-mark of the serpent burnt in it,

The gentleness and pulse of purity ;
Twisted his artful cunning in among
The openness of sweet sincerity ;
Aye, in the ringing of a hollow laugh,
The pale abortion of a foul contract,
When practised need first wed with natural good
And grew together in his sunken years—
Made smiles and roses in the countenance
And delicate infancy of sweet innocence.
Nay further, daily thro' the haunts of men
Who heard alone, fearing pure woman's eye,
Hating all faiths, and holding them but dreams,
He moved a kind of drunken wonderment,
King-infidel, god-intellectual, man
Sensual, one that lived all truth a lie.
Till lastly Rumour said what broke his force
And left the palsied ruin of a life,
He dream'd the dream that folds the eye of Vice,
How that once sleeping he had lain with Death,
When as he closer press'd unknowingly,
Lo, the cold hollow eyes with ghostly gleam
Laugh'd mimical response ! yet tho' he rose,

Fled the foul horror of his own intent,
Crept back into the darkness, still that laugh
Rang thro' him haunting, as a naming call,
A voice from hell that beckon'd to its own.
Wherefore henceforward he had evermore
Slunk the pure light of ordinary day,
And lived alone, unseen, a fallen man.

Finally it was held concerning him—
Because of his dead loss to all of truth,
Feeding on evil only, nourish'd by it,
His nature had so changed that every pulse
Beat as the natural man's no longer, but
That to all purposes and deeds of heart,
As touching aught of present influence,
Tho' corporate still, his nature had become
A power for Evil, devil, or any name
By which man knows the power and call to sin.
That henceforth for his ends, the love of ill,
(Tho' seldom seen, yet felt at every turn)
Waylaid men's minds with crooked forms of thought,
Posted invisible agents to discern

Each impulse born of good, forthwith impinged
Some fickle emotion whispering it but vain.
In fine, that whensoever Man's desire,
Faithfully longing to discern the right,
Turn'd with a hopeful energy to probe
Some part of truth among conflicting creeds,
He, or his like, who sovereign'd that chief sin
Which had its counter-part within the man,
Moved it to issue, blur the coming light
And spontaneity of the prayerful soul.
So with such power to tempt and test all men,
Whether or take the evil, choose the good.

Life hath two lives in the same nature ; first
The spring-flush of sweet delicate delights ;
The frolic with the fancy of the hour ;
The eager hope in each new enterprise ;
The step into full manhood, all complete !—
Slowly now Fancy withers ; slowly comes

A growing knowing of self's self in pain ;
A hungering after all the truth without ;
A patient brokenness, a second sight ;
A still soul-keeping to completer Day.

Now in the years just pass'd, those vacant years
That came to Gilbert after his wife's death,
Bearing no holy sympathy, no love,
But hunger, no light footstep with the morn,
But ever as the day or went or came,
The homeless home, the un-companion'd eve,
The motherless children's prattle ; ever too
That gnawing in the thought which gradually
Eats out contentment, leaves an aching void
Where smouldering ills can quicken ; a desire
Grew for an object love, wherein he might
Re-live himself again, and make the past
Be as it were not.

When after time

Had borne a calmer patience to his grief
Thro' faith's acceptance—each and every day
Watching his children grow, the boy himself
Partly, in memory of his boyhood's days—
And little Una daily glancing forth,
(So like that life remember'd) whose fair light
Touching his spirit, kindled memories
(Even as he dream'd of happy days gone by,
Love's saunter thro' the galleries of Art)
Of those Italian souls, who love-absorb'd,
In full-faith contemplation clearly saw
Likeness of angel childhood, and as they saw
Turn'd to depicture all the glory known,
Reveal'd from heaven to gladden every faith.
And into one would come mysteriously
Another, as he dream'd the soldier's dream—
There, on the same white heaven-held canvas sat
She, the ideal of true womanhood,
Clothed a Madonna, round her children playing,
Laughing their merry venture to approach
Nearest the mother-hand, that, glowing, reach'd
An equal benediction—love of love !

But, as observance of another's wants
Brings home that other's weariness, removes
The weariness within ; so now erelong,
Moving each day among his country haunts,
The will and cheerfulness of those who toil'd
Hopefully onwards, and ne'er ceased to toil ;
Conscience awoke, ' No dreaming life for me !
' I take the memory of the lovely past,
' Wrap it within my bosom, lay it away
' Sacred, till we in heaven embrace once more.
' I go to damn the evil, aid the good,
' God's honour, man's deliverance, faith and need.
' The boy must live : God's purpose sent him here,
' Made him,—I also make him, bring him to
' The best and noblest service—mine to shape !'

When with this sudden resolve so taken up,
Promising thus himself ' The boy should be
' As one of those old painter's children, grow
' In all those finer qualities of worth,
' Filial sweetnesses, affections pure,
' That are youth's charm and beauty—yet withal

‘ With fact of life within him ; practised well
‘ In every step of manly enterprise
‘ And generous ardour—with the noble wish
‘ To lead the van of life, approve himself
‘ The model of a knightly gentleman——’

But Faith shapes out only the daily need,
Leaves all the yearly future unto God.
Wherefore, within him now, since faith deprived
Of love its due, grows fainter and less clear,
Loses the full light it had own’d before,—
A correspondent misgrowth of the soul
Towards new hope beside the one right life
Began, and in its own progression form’d
Image and obstacle between the truth
And perfect vision,—caused the man to err
Unknowingly, unknowing of the change
Within himself, tho’ born of own free will.

And, ere a year had pass’d, still following on
The apprehension of this new-born hope,
This little idol that should rule the world ;

More by degrees forgetful of himself—
His soul so daily grew about the boy,
So wrapt from its own calling—now, at last,
Slowly, unconsciously, the child became
As his own conscience, singled so for love.

Again his country chose him for their voice
In national council : Times had greatly changed.
For now the old faith in political creeds
Was dying ; progress of research had shown
How Nature, analyzed by science' light,
Was the one parent of all things,—how she pass'd
But at the beck and call of vacant Time
Thro' one unwavering everlasting change,
Moulding all things again from old to new.
When men, forgetting faith, and all without
The present beating of the human pulse,
Argued equivalent law in spiritual things,
Subordinate to material—yes, or no ?

Yes, had they answer'd, and forgotten God
In practical denial. So arose
Theories innumerable of right and wrong ;
And all men's hearts began to ache for truth,
Lost in self-conduct. Now the Intellect
Alone could rule—for, was it not indeed
The highest faculty within a man ?
And with each revolution in the brain
Came forms, beliefs, and creeds of natural faith
Drawn from the visible world of sense alone.
Now it was taught the future would evolve
Belief itself into self-evident law :
And that the Conscience, man's infallible guide,
Would live and grow, directing all things right,
Without invisible aid or given power
From That which caused it——

So he rose, and went—

Struck under many a fallacy, broke thro'
The gloss'd veneer of vapouring phantasy,
The shell of superficiality ;
And swept the rationalistic rubbish up

Clean from the pure white floor of Truth—laid bare.
Its naked excellence, then ask'd of men
Its nature, origin, elemental all,
And *if* they could not name it, wherefore think
To shape in Ignorance the wisest law ?
' Was *that* the pilot helm'd the ship of men
' Among the general shoal-beds ; ever kept
' The head thro' secret shallows safe to port ? '

And later,—for new notions were afloat—
He listen'd to the plausible theories
For ruling men by fine mechanic lines
Of law in equilibrium, balancing
The individual all most delicately ;
Men's passions thro' all time in one fair scale
Beam'd in the reason at a special date ;
Making an end of power ; wherein one will,
One undiscover'd passion might o'erthrow
All order into infidel anarchy.
When breaking in upon such phantom dreams,
Spun in the brain-pride of life's fallacy,
Bound round the soul's emotion—' Man,' he said,

‘ Throughout all ages was but rutable
‘ By that just measure of himself which led
‘ To justice to another—all the laws
‘ Woven within a pulseless closet life,
‘ As a still shallow lacking aught of tide—
‘ Would prove a spider’s cable to withstand
‘ The storms of terrible passion as they rose
‘ And caught the slumbering vessel unawares.
‘ The power to hold her sure, the living Power,
‘ Magnetic cable linking one and all,
‘ Lay only in the soul’s nobility,
‘ Which, rising up thro’ all material forms,
‘ All speculations, science, methodism,
‘ Stood in the consciousness of its right will
‘ On faith and justice ;—these the sum of all.’

There are pure passages of holy love
And rest from labour to the weary life,
That come like manna in the wilderness

Of a long toil, a desert rock-draught sweet,
Bearing that rest and joy which half re-make,
And fit the spirit for its pilgrimage.

Then the year wore ; and autumn touch'd again
The mellowing summer verdure with the shades
Of variegated ripeness ; and as his wont
(After a sickness) he would go and sit
Beside the fountain, where the open lawn
Caught the sea distance thro' the shadow'd hills ;
There watch the glorious setting in its prime
Burn out the dead day in its purple light
Of prescient resurrection ;—a happy group ;
Close nestled on his shoulder Una's face,
Her ringdove at her cheek, between their speech
Cooing secluded musing harmony ;
With Albert on his wolf-hound pillow'd low,
Silently answering ;—Love's repose is peace ;—
While Nature sympathising, interwove

Her tender resting colour, thro' the calm
Sweet twilight meditation, parting song—
The clarion note of blackbird, plaint of thrush,
And the soul-vesper of the nightingale ;
Between whose exquisite offerings, everything
Knelt speechless, as the votive melody
Rose melting slowly onwards into night,
Dissolved itself in sleep, and the unknown.

But on the morrow, as the children play'd
King and Queen, in the full noonday sun ;
Lacking a servant, he grown jealous of her—
' She should be servant to him, fetch and kneel
' And go and carry, whilst he sat the King,
' Crown'd royal on the rustic oak-chair throne.'
When had she waited meekly, brought and knelt
And made most sweet obeisance to the King,
Who sat high pleased and honour'd, ordering all
Right royally ;—till, wearying of his rule,
Wishing a lighter, merrier life through all—
Lo ! on a lily's cheek, right 'neath his feet,
Suddenly settling, such a dragon-fly !

Were *ever* such colours !—from the throne he sprang
To grasp it ; when it rose and brightly flew,
Settling, yet as he near'd again uprose,
Winging towards the wood—but now, see, lit
Fast on the red edge of that golden flower,
Almost in reach !—yet rose, he chasing still,
Sparkling it droop'd into the woodland shade.

When as the day wore, shadow gradually
Crept o'er receding light, filling all space
With glamour, growing deeper into dark,
And night loom'd up the horizon, yet the boy
Return'd not, Gilbert, fearing secret harm,
Call'd for a light, and bade the household rise
And scour the woodland hollows till the morn.
Then they all rose together, together pass'd
Into the woodland thicket, parted there,
Each taking separate issues to the end.
Some thro' the dips and quarried hollows search'd,
Some probed the thickest of the thicket thro' ;
Now from the high top of the mountain peak
Rang the clear voice, but yet no answer came,

Save the cold mocking echo, then the calm,
The terrible silence so distinctly heard.
While Gilbert, partly grieving, part in fear,
Pierced to the centre of the difficult maze,
And traced its woven intricacies out
Into the wildest open,—all in vain.
Unwearied still, still seeking, still they sought
Unweariedly,—thro' the whole thickening night,
Till the ninth hour of the morrow : yet no sign.

When, failing to think aright, and brooding now
Long hours alone—the search withdrawn in loss—
' Taken away,' kept muttering to himself,
' Who but that *One* could work it, had the will,
' That curse who trail'd so near him?' And as he spoke,
No sooner had those words escaped his lips,
Shaped themselves out distinctly into thought—
Seized by a righteous anger, doubting not
The truth which spoke within him, he arose,
Mounted his horse, put spur, dash'd down the glade,
Gallop'd the valley, shot the glooming gorge,
The hill-side waste, wound the dead avenue

Down to Sir Wildred's door—there slacken'd rein—
Met him upon the threshold, and without
Word of good-morrow, in indignant speech,
(As one whose conscience has no power to rule)
Demanded his own son.

And Wildred stared,
Blankly, a sympathetic cold surprise—
'Lost was the boy? how lost? or when? or where?
'How long?—so sad! yet, wherefore should *he* know
'More than another where the body lay?
'Might he but search to find the child?'

Then ere
Reflection could lay finger on the will,
Soul-stung, (like one whose conscience is no more)
Momently, ere that other was aware—
Gilbert had fell'd him.

Slowly gathering up
Himself, and all the envy of the past
Into one glance of clear triumphant hate,

—From a foreseen result of present deed
In his own witness'd hands, two hell-serfs by —
' Ah, well ! ' he hiss'd ; withdrew. He was alone.

Next day there came a letter from the law
To Gilbert ; claim'd his person for assault ;
Took him ; it stated at the evidence
Of two who witness'd all—no witness else—
Hazard their master's life ! this one had sworn
' Never to keep the peace ! that now he stood
' A traitor to his country and its laws ;—
' Nay further, were the whole known, they believed,
' Either his dreams of good had warp'd his brain
' From judication of plain present truth ;
' Or the high aspiration, overstrain
' In public service, had so finely drawn
' The threading of his mind betwixt extremes,
' That he no longer clearly recognized
' Free right from wrong ' :—so yet the law retain'd.

And weeks pass'd on—and still, because he would not
Acquit that other in the public ear

Of ignorance of what still held the child,
Convinced, he knew not why, that Wildred knew—
Not holding his love's hunger prudently ;
But now and then with pain'd impassion'd voice
Outspeaking that which righteously within
Possess'd him,—said, ' The Devil was at large,
' Tempting to fallen service, offering
' Largess and liberty for the poor exchange
' Of his misprision'd conscience '——' would he deal ? '
' Covenant for love his sense and word of truth ? '
" No,—die first ! "—wherefore, still the law retain'd.

But, as a bird of passage sweetly comes
Across the weary waters with the spring
To gladden hearts and homes, or as that Dove
Who once went sailing over the wide waste
Of desolation, yet when hoped return'd,
Bearing the olive-spray of peace and rest
Into the bosom of the faithful ones,
Came little Una now ; who always pass'd
Within or out unnoticed, undetain'd
By those who watch'd, (who seeing, but half saw,

Took her but for some little angel thing,
Quite harmless, only love and nothing more)
Who then would seat herself upon his knee
And speak into his eyes; and talk, and tell
Of all she knew to comfort—speak of her,
Her mother, as tho' present with them still—
And then of Albert, him whom all so loved,
So dear—so good—not lost—O no, not lost !
Only a little while but taken away
By *him*, that wicked one, to tempt and prove.
And seeing sometimes her father weep, would pray—
Extend her little arms straight up to God,
Ask for His mercy, which no sooner ask'd,
She, like some heaven-sent angel ministrant,
Turn'd to him with a speech beyond her years,
Told this was but a proof how he loved God,
And good, and all things heavenly.

Till, at last,

Coming each day between to comfort him,
And twine her little heart about his own,
She melted down the strong man, growing old,

Out of his strain'd resolve, nay, humbled him
More than aught else could; till, ere autumn passed,
Either by reason of her gentle speech,
Or the strange spirituality of her mind,
Or the felt nearness of her soul to Him
Who sent, Who made it—whatsoever the cause—
A change grew in the man, a calmer will,
And a new spirit became known to him.

But somehow—for no human reason known—
The child would often meditate alone
About her father, and her brother's loss;
Where gone she knew not, yet not dead she held
Persistently, without a reason why,
Seeming to know the truth beyond her years:
And pining for them, this unnatural life,
The strain her little soul made to relieve
Her father's loneliness; or more than this,
The daily fear that haunted her of him
Who moved so near them, whom she always call'd
The wicked spirit, Prince of this world, him
Her mother knew came somehow in the flesh

To tempt all people, t—hese so wore the child,¹
She, like a may-bud in a nipping wind,
Droopt, as about to fade before her bloom.

* * * *

Now on an evening—when the yellow leaf
Was blown about the harvest, and the gray
Shades of approaching winter shudder'd across
The parting beams of autumn, faintlier grew
The hope they nurtured, all foreshadowing
Bare winter's interdict—Gilbert alone,
Suddenly in the gloaming Wildred stood
Beside him ; thus, half jauntily he spoke :

‘ The night hath secret ears, I fear thee not !
‘ But come to offer thee, my curse, a blessing.
‘ The boy still lives !—and to thine aching arms
‘ Ere sunrise shall be borne : if thou, poor soul !
‘ Who art so lonely in thy loneliness,
‘ So misery-gloated in thy self respect,
‘ Sign'st this my bond : its terms, thou sign'st to me
‘ The worth of that I give,—thy worldly all.’

Quickly Sir Gilbert answer'd, for his soul
Rush'd forward towards the boy, in that he loved
Him as his conscience, better than his life :
' For *that* I live, I pay the present's own
' And stand acquitted !——Wherefore, take thy terms,
' As here I sign thy strange unnatural bond.'

Again the day wore, when as eve return'd
In shadowy twilight, in the dimness stood
That Voice again : again spoke falsely thus :—

' What think you cousin ! have you righted me ?
' Settled your whole account with this strange world ?
' Paid me so fully that I need no more ?
' Egad, the money's worth is well enow !
' But does the velvet of a second suit
' Raze out remembrance of old habitudes ?
' No ! there is one thing more ; I charge you say
' In the world's ear, that I am innocent
' Of your loud accusations—born of spleen—
' That some misshapen enmity outlived
' Awhile your reason,—now the whole is clear,

‘ I am a gentleman like other men.
‘ So, by the credit of one as yourself,
‘ Among the high fools do I take my place,
‘ Laugh at the silly simple moral wits,
‘ Couch on the luxury of a clever word !—
‘ Take now my second bond,—swear me but this,
‘ And I forego all interest in the child.’

And Gilbert paused awhile, not thinking of him,
For suddenly thro’ his soul had shot remembrance
Of that vile Tempter who had erst waylaid
His Lord, demanding worship for the gift
Of present glory—how the Victor there,
Ruling himself above all human power,
Answer’d, and left that other no avail.
So, at the instant, had he striven to rule
His passion ; and,—half-gaining, half in loss,—
Into one effort gathering all he own’d
Of faith, and love, remembrance of good deed—
Replied, (tho’ yet so low that Wildred err’d)
‘ Never upon my conscience rests a lie.’

Then Wildred feeling all lay to his hand
Easily, for in Gilbert there remain'd
Nor power nor virtue to shake off the coil,
Part the well-woven web, since that the boy
Stood to him as his conscience, so he would
Relinquish *all* of present for the child ;
Tauntingly loos'd his tongue, jeering at all :
' The wise soon learn the world's ways !—only those,
' Who wear the napkin of their babyhood
' Till manhood, hold their mother's milk-tales true ;
' Talk of a conscience, let it stand between
' Themselves and present hunger,—so lose all.
' Conscience, what is it—this fine mystic law ?
' A nothing that owns nothing !—or, if anything,
' A something that claims everything ; so anything's
' As good as anything, and everything's
' As good as anything, and so all's nothing !
' 'Tis but the phantom of some yellow shell
' Of sapless manhood, who in coward dreams
' And half-fanatic misery once forged
' This graspless entity, figure of speech,
' To be a boon companion to outspell

‘ His half-dead self, approve his phantasies !
‘ You hold such ? You ? one whom the world calls wise ?
‘ A leader born ? a nation’s exponent—
‘ A stay ; a grateful people’s wonder, nay
‘ So politic of reason’s excellence
‘ To shape necessity to *every* need !
‘ Faugh ! ’tis a humorous lie ! a buncombe tale—
‘ You are more virtuous to occasion ?——Come
‘ Give me a white name and I give a son.’

The fool—he ended ‘ son,’ and knew it not,
Blind in his own dark cunning. Wherefore now,
In that inscrutable past-human law,
Whence evil has grown out of a blind good,
That seeing not in the hour takes itself
For best, obscure a better—loving his child
As all, too much, so shadowing all other—
Yet that *too much*, a blind best, now returns
Itself into a service as divine,
A postponed answering ;—a ‘ son ’ he heard,
The rest was all forgotten, as there rose
That long-fed hallow’d anger—love for all,

The boy—his mother—Una—all his own—
When, as his passion caught him, love imprest
Into intensest utterance (balancing
That byegone overmuch with overmuch)
In a great voice he shook his answer out :

‘ Hence thou hell-saint ! and to thy kith and kin
‘ Talk thy polite damnation—or, by the powers
‘ Of God I hold, thou shalt be nevermore,
‘ Cursing men’s holiest impulses ! ’

——He spoke.

And, as the shadow of a fallen spirit
Crosses within the horizon of the mind,
Making its vision dim with instant pain,
Yet passes ; so that human-spirit shrank,
Darkly it disappear’d—when, as he turn’d,
Seeking to see, yet saw not, staggering, fell
Forwards in reaching for some power to hold,
Some stay in the moment—‘ was not *all* now lost,
‘ By his own act ?—O God, uphold me still ! ’
Lo, in the dimness of the waning moon

Came little Una, entering unawares—
Who seeing him lost, soul-questioning himself,
Then threw her little arms about his neck,
And press'd her tiny bosom to his own,
And spoke not for a while ; then sweetly said :
' Those whom God loves most, they are tempted most ;
' Their hearts are finer in their sympathy,
' Their love more kin to Christ's, yet human more
' Than others ; O my father, do not weep,
' But let us pray together—— '

Then they pray'd,

Kneeling together : ' O Father of us all,
' Who knowest why we are, and what we are,
' And all our weaknesses, and all the past,
' And all our wants, have mercy on us now ;
' Keep us from falling, for the sake of Christ,
' Our own sakes are unworthy ; let Thy Spirit
' Breathe in our souls the knowledge of Thy ways,
' Thy will concerning us, that we may know
' Why we now suffer, wishing all things good.
' We are Thy creatures, give us strength to live

‘ As Thou would’st have us live, make us to see
‘ Our good grow thro’ our suffering, our worth
‘ Rise from our trial, as the worth of Christ.’

But, since the child minister’d daily to him,
And strove to tell the meaning of his loss,
How that this only was a *spiritual* truth,
And that her brother would soon come again
Pure from that wicked one who held him still—
Yet saw he but partly listen’d, questioning now
Absently, as not thinking while he ask’d ;
And weeks dragg’d by without a real relief :
She pined in secret, kneeling thro’ sleepless nights
Praying for her father ; and,—ere winter pass’d,—
Worn to a shadow of her loveliness,
Daily she faintlier moved, flitting about
More as a spirit, haunting yet the place.

Till, on a morning when the new-found spring
Gave the first snowdrop with its edge of gold
Born of the resurrection of the year ;
And, as her wont, she would have come to him,

Yet came not, and he pass'd to seek the child ;
There lay the beautiful angelic thing,
Quietly sleeping, never to awake,
A smile still lingering round her tiny mouth,
Left by some lively image, and a star
Caught from a sun-ray on her bosom cross
That underneath her mother's picture hung,
Filling her forehead ; so the little life
Had ceased unknowingly to any one.

There are who Nature's Hope predestinates,
—Womb'd in a double faith that increates
The life a double insight,—who so see
All laws and revelations passing thro'
The lens of each man's own imagination,
Thro' each soul's virtue, colour, faith, and will —
Immoulded to that nature,—tuned and drawn
But to the tint and limit of itself,—
Cramping the politic beat and exercise

Of universal harmony,—who are
Her spirit's compensation, who attune
Her grown discordant concord, regulate
The fine spring of her utterance, thro' all
To happier modulation.

Broken now from the world, and from each hope
That fed the purpose of his heart anew
From day to day with a lingering love for life,
Slowly a blank despair grew on the man.
It seem'd the agony of a spirit's pain
Had pierced the depths within him, frozen up
The flow and fine pulsation of a soul,
And made the mindless image of a man,
So absent was he. In a little while
Came hollow mutterings: 'Cruel was that Power
'Who will'd, who made him! Cruel that first Cause
'Who fore-ordained fore-imagined ill,
'And cursed the breath of nature!'—And soon doubts

Brought faithless wanderings. . . ' Life was a lie !
' Past, but the fickle deed of soulless Change !
' Future, new hunger fashion'd by Desire,
' Shaped by her breath and will till weary of it !'—

Yet the man fail'd not, tho' temptation wove
Awhile a dimness round his soul, for yet
His will remain'd unbroken. Soon within
Two voices spoke—spirit hath utterance
Akin to sense—' The good of a joyless world,
' Whose offerings were as ashes unto one
' Whose life had ever been the lip of love,
' The tongue immortal.' . . ' Let the sense unbound
' Feed with an ever parching breath, consume
' Its lingering self in its own appetite.'

When, as he rose, and paced his vacant room,
His childless room, half-saying as he went,
' I fall away from God, I leave the good,
' Since proof hath come to me, so prove myself
' Worthless, nay well unworthy ! . . Never so !'
' Let the end come, I hold the good thro' all.'

Verily as he spake, saying those words,
Light dawn'd in spiritual answer, and he heard,—
' *The world is evil, can good live in peace?* '—
And a new hope settled within him there.

And ere another grey-grown year had roll'd
Into eternity—History engraved
With iron finger on the lip of Time
Its pathos and its passion, pain and hope,
The labour and the sleeping of its sons—
And all the wisdom long'd for, folly known,
Forgotten love, remember'd impotence,
For speech to tell its offspring—he had pass'd
Away from present, for his spirit yearn'd
Far toward the future, and the truth of things
Unseen———

PART III.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

THE Life which now is *is* ; another Life
Is that we can deny not ; whose first speech
Within the present human grows distinct,
And recognized immortal at the rest
Of present function ; when itself asserts
An unknown personality, a will
Without corporeal, an embodiment
Transcending visibility, and an end
Beyond itself.

And this Life is the Soul,—
Folded by God within the human man ;
One with himself, within that mystery

Of Reason,—immaterial equipoise,—
Growing with both, to both ; which ever weighs
With an impartiality godlike
Present and future.

Hath this Soul no growth,
No life, no progress, no development
Thro' Time towards eternity? Is it but
A passive something? entity forgot
In Sense's memory? a life to be,
Not being? —

O rather say, in faith, O Man,
That as the Body from the cradle forwards,
Thro' each succeeding cycle in its change,
Ripens towards the grave ; even so, the Soul,
By virtue of the law of its first being,
Nature and end, so grows ; until death's birth
Bears mortal into immortality.

P A R T I I I.

It is evening ; a mystic breathing air
Enfolds the shadowy landscape ; all is calm ;
No voice moves sound ; the folded wing is mute ;
Life is not visible ; a ghostly ruin
On the low-breathing bosom of the hill
Leans solitary ; o'er the absent scene
Hovers a vagrant gloom : and all the hour
Is full of mystery and reverie.

Here, to the self-same spot where erst we met,
I and that Solitary one whose life
Vainly with broken emphasis is told—
And down the waste and use of weary years
That bent my spirit to a feeble remnant

Of that once strong and hopeful energy
For life to be, unwrought—again I came.
All hope was now endurance ; faith was deed ;
And love the seeking for some sympathy
Of spiritual liking.

For hard years had pass'd—
Years of denial, pain, of everything
That proves a man ; that leaves him but the wish
Of childhood's energy ; yet makes the life
Worthier and better ; and inweaves the sense
Of sympathy and fellowship with man
Struggling—still seeking thro' the folding mists
Of superstition, ignorance, and fear,
To grope his way, to grow in spiritual truth
And certain knowledge ———

And a Rumour lived
Vaguely about the man (who ten years since
Had left the world for solitude and peace)
That now by virtue of his abstinence,
And power of sure-control upon himself,

Back'd by the mysteries of hidden faith—
His nature had so changed, that every pulse
Beat as the natural man's no longer ; but
(Passion immoulded into spiritual power)
Rose to a holier impulse ; daily moved
God-wards in every effort, and so kept
Pure the heart's life and vision of the soul.

And that by reason of this inward change,
This spiritual hold upon the human man,
Aided by grace without, the gift of prayer—
His sense of understanding had become
Full to its limits ; that he now received
Truths which the general world had not attain'd ;
And lived each day a wiser, better, life—
Spending the lonely hours in faith and prayer,
Interpreting the will of God to man
Original.

So to him now I came,
Full of the memory of our past meeting ;
And from the woodland edge where erst I sat


Reflecting o'er the solitary scene,
Pass'd to a fir-clad knoll that overlook'd
My old remembrances,—the placid mere ;
The lilies sleeping in their loveliness ;
The shadowy landscape ; earth's immerging haze ;
The many-tinted foliage mellowing ;
The Ruin, emblem of a noble past,
Coldly illumined by the misty moon,
Knowledge of things, as sunlight was to Faith,
So the old man had told me : and I paused.

The hour was hallowing in its strange sense
Of calm reflective beauty ; round me lay
Something of Nature's all,—earth, wood, field, sky,
Lake, and sweet undulation modulating ;
All bearing its own influence within,
All seeming separate in its unity,
All breathing one eternal voiceless change
Of Mystery in being made manifest :—
The chill grey light ; the mystic whitening gloom ;
The motionless emotion of the hour ;
The still sweet pleasing moving vacancy ;

The lightning flash of some unspherèd star,
The momentary pleasure in the sight,
As the new light of knowledge entering—
Then fading in the distance as a dream ;
The thickening dimness ; slowly waning joy ;
The effort to resuscitate the past—
And the last sameness that inwove the whole.

It seem'd the mystery of human knowledge
Figured before my eyes ; the end of it—
The understanding of the human mind
Mirror'd in Nature, and the soul of Man
Taught to discern between its pleasing sense
And faith's realities. For what was knowledge,
More than a pleasing sense, a twilit scene,
A vanity, a humour, or a dream ?
Was Man the happier ? did it lessen pain ?
Determine judgment ? *settle* him in truth ?—
Was he the *worthier* for it as a Man ?—
What did it bring him for a sustenance ?
Facts that are lifeless, and possess no being,
Have no reality beyond the thought,

Which, of itself, might only be of Sense,—
Some theory that waited on the brain,
Took of its colour, shape, and quality,
Ecstasy, property, *material* own.
Did it bring peace of heart unto a Man ?—
Speak but its latitude and excellence !
' The wants of love but vainly satisfied
Within the limits which it can in-breathe :
The interests of the soul but poorly fed
In the cold faithless faith it finds around :
The claims of sense but daily negated,
Denied by reason which itself denied :
Reason dissatisfied with everything,
Self-made of all things most unreasonable :
The gentle trust that lives to contemplate,
Broken by palsying doubt and vanity :
Youth's energy to give the fullness being
Of hope's anticipations, neutralized !
The meditation that compares all truth
But to create new beauty—shadow'd, marr'd :
The correlation of material things
With things of spirit, but impurifying :



The self-importunation but to know
Surely, and separate the false from true,
But as an effort of this fading light
To check the darkness, to resuscitate
Day's imperfection—fainting, failing still,
Leaving but shadow, dimness, cold grey light,
The consciousness but of a present being,
And the mute sense of endless mystery.'

And without faith, to what did knowledge lead ?
What were its judgments of the truths of life ?
Let it test Nature, try to verify
Man's origin, whence comes he, whither goes.
Matter, was it the sum of everything ?
Was Soul but Sense ? essence of Matter's being ?
The central fire in life ? the human core ?
Heat could but animate, impregnate not ;
It could produce, but not originate :
The power to bear it own'd, the *seed* own'd not.
Seed must first be of that which was itself,
Nature in self possessing double nature,
The life-in-law and law-in-life in one—

Power to produce and to originate,
Or itself lack'd the that itself must own.
Law *before* life the cause of everything ?
Life but the product of an ageless Time ?
Verily so, Man were a waif of Fate !
A soulless entity ! a mindless point !
Semblance born out of the Inevitable,
Owning no *will* within himself, yet bearing
Rule to all other !—Reason so were not,
Law not, nor Order, for a *lifeless* law
Could not ordain law :—‘ Chaos reigns supreme !
‘ Knowledge is ignorance ! Ignorance true knowledge !
‘ Mind an illusion ! Thought a sensuous dream !
‘ Spirit a phantom ! life a tick of Time ! ’—

The Order that we see could not exist
Without intelligence ; disorder only :
Things do not right themselves, but ranker grow.
Life could not be, nor Law ; for law itself
Is a creation of intelligence.
The first and last of Man's philosophy
Must be a nature like unto his own !

So in the infinite folly that abounds
Exists *real* truth, knowledge as *light* to Man,
Immortal as the Origin of all,
Being of itself of all—the life-in-law
And law-in-life in One—creation through.
How shall Man know it, knowledge such as this ?
We analyze the nature of each thing,
Divide, and subdivide, and re-arrange,
Then find it has no *life*, we have destroy'd it
Even in the process as we seek to know.
Vision of truth must be the soul of all
Or the thing *dies* beneath the carver's hand !
Without it Man is lost ! he stumbles forward
Wishing all well, yet working his own fall ;
Things lose their meaning, words their separate sense,
Soul sinks and sickens, nature fails and swoons,
Life itself fades, death is our animation —————

A shadow woke me to a present self—
When there before my eyes once stood again
That human-spirit. Silently he spoke.
' Son, dost thou seek me yet again ?—Why so ?

‘ Has the world worn thee to a Solitary ?
‘ Art weary of the semblances of things ?
‘ The truth is hard to those would live it right—
‘ Yet faint not. God is just, tho’ man is weak.
‘ Freely I give thee, O my brother man
‘ All that *I* know, or all that I *can* know
‘ Whilst in the burden of this fleshly sense.
‘ Take courage. God’s ways are a mystery—
‘ For to such as myself, who live alone,
‘ Without all pleasures of the natural man,
‘ Even for my duty, there is given a sense,
‘ A comfort, and a privilege in being,
‘ That the cold outer world can never know.
‘ Think not creation’s self is but a span
‘ Of this world’s weariness, and worn desire ;
‘ The God who made this earth, this present knows,
‘ Can make a happy one in time to come.
‘ World after world, and heaven after heaven,
‘ In that vast fathomless infinitude
‘ Above us, O my brother, are not made
‘ All to one pattern ; but the woof is wound
‘ Inscrutably, with forms as infinite

‘ Of life, as space itself,—for Man alone,
‘ He in his order must inherit all.’

‘ But why for *Man* ? ’ I cried—‘ Why dreams he still
‘ Of worlds beyond ? so wears his present out
‘ In vain no living :—What to him is life,
‘ Owning no satisfaction *as* he lives ? ’

That spirit-voice again came answering—
‘ Faith is not passion, Knowledge human pride ;
‘ Nor are the struggles of a lonely few
‘ Potent to liberate the world of evil.
‘ Each must discern, each learn and prove his own,
‘ Within the limits of this present being.
‘ The Body needs must toil that it may live ;
‘ So must man’s Spirit—freely to the end.
‘ The laws of truth are written in the soul
‘ For each life’s guidance, each must spell them thro’ ;
‘ Such is the problem this life needs to solve.
‘ Man is not born the puppet of an hour,
‘ Incapable, a thing of shame, a drone !
‘ His function is to rule the universe

‘ After the will of God—to mould each world.
‘ Creation’s self is one, kind in degree,
‘ The re-formation of all things that are
‘ Into a higher, nobler than the last—
‘ But as in Nature, things of instinct life,
‘ Without the aid of Man’s intelligence,
‘ Grow backward, fail, confuse, and fall away,
‘ Sink to the lowest of their matter’s being ;
‘ Even so does Man, left to his *human* self,
‘ Without the aid of That intelligence
‘ Above, beyond him, sink, mis-live, and fall
‘ Prone to his uttermost but animal.
‘ Christ is the stay to Man as Man to Nature !
‘ The *supernatural* known intelligence
‘ Shewing him all things,—present, past, to come,
‘ Making and keeping, proving him very Man.’

‘ But *Why?* Why so?’—I cried ‘Where is Man’s proof
‘ Of the *reality* of his belief?—
‘ How *knows* he truth?—truth that shall fore-proclaim
‘ Surely the secret to his everything!’—

Again so answering came that spirit-voice—
‘ The measure of true knowledge is our faith,—
‘ For only do we know of things we *see* ;
‘ And seeing not, our knowing is but vain,
‘ The semblance of the surety we desire.
‘ Faith is the substance of the human soul
‘ Evidencing its own attributes in words ;
‘ It feels, it needs, it claims, so speaks itself
‘ Out thro’ the circumstance it finds around.
‘ Man’s life is *doing that* his soul foretells
‘ By inward speech of its necessities ;
‘ So wears the Body to a better self,
‘ Purer in all things, worthier its true end.
‘ So thro’ the several decads of his day
‘ Man’s onward course is upwards, ever higher ;
‘ And Age is truly honour’d in its rest
‘ By Youth still struggling with his destiny.
‘ Futile the laws of mind and intellect
‘ To shape Man’s course, ordain his history !
‘ Veiling that vision which alone can tell
‘ His nature’s verity—the soul’s desire.
‘ The spontaneity that *wills* a deed

‘ Is not of reason, but of faith in self ;
‘ Forego that faith,—and Man is lost indeed,
‘ And all his living is but nothingness !
‘ Vain will his efforts be to live aright,
‘ To follow his Example gone before,
‘ If he forego that *truth* within himself,
‘ The chart and compass to his one life’s end.’


‘ *But*, if he follow it, What then ? ’—I cried !
‘ Must he perforce in *all ways* rightly live ?
‘ Rather, how *can* he so,—thro’ changing Time,—
‘ Seeing this is believed an evil world ? ’

Once more that spirit-voice thus answered me—
‘ Man shapes his own course in each weary age ;
‘ By the sole exercise of his sovereign will
‘ Ordains the future history of the world.
‘ There will be Good and Evil at the last.
‘ Time shows distinctions widening, opening out,
‘ Merges not differences. The inward life
‘ Grows wider—though not outwardly—apart ;
‘ Things do not resolve themselves towards one end.

‘ The virtue of the Good lives for the good,
‘ Unseen, a secret life, to God alone
‘ Known and recorded. Sin is in the day,
‘ Open, and walks triumphant, paying no court
‘ To law or reason :—Let the end grow on.
‘ Those who are faithful will yet find their own
‘ Past all temptations. Man is free to act ;
‘ His nature owns the law of everything
‘ In its true order. Worship must he still,
‘ It is the first condition of his being ;
‘ Knowledge he will obtain for his own ends :
‘ Action remit to impulse, seldom choose :
‘ But, let him quit his nature’s ordinance,
‘ The sovereign order of his inward rule,—
‘ And he is lost, undone to his life’s end.
‘ Self-love impels forgetfulness of good,
‘ Past and indebted, benefits received,
‘ Recognized truly at the hour of need :
‘ So in the ripeness of his complete self
‘ Man forgets God,—foregoes remembrance borne
‘ Of all things outwards to his present’s own.
‘ Knowledge succeeds to faith, becomes his rule,

‘ Possesses for a fainting little while
‘ His whole intent,—obtains and owns the Man,
‘ Self-happy in his endings, self-content.
‘ Such is the history of this present hour—
‘ Faith wanes even now; the many seek not God;
‘ Knowledge is now Man’s worship; it will grow
‘ And blossom in the fullness of its time,
‘ And be Man’s glory and idolatry,
‘ His pride, his end, his shame, till Man himself,
‘ Lost in his flatulent self-love, will deny
‘ Even his knowledge, turning to things of sense;
‘ When law will cease; and the world’s self need end.’

He ceased; yet momentarily that voice remain’d.
When, as I raised my head to see the man,
To question him, that I might further know
More of the things of faith and spiritual life—
Lo! I saw nothing but the clear white moon
Full on my face, and round the myriad stars
In speechless sympathy. And o’er my mind,
Even as the misty vapour of the hour,
Crept the old dimness, and the thin weak sense



Of lost assurance, personal hope and fear,
With but the insight of past knowledge gain'd.

Yet as I rose and slowly turn'd away,
Back to retrace my solitary steps
Into the weary round of present things—
Still onward as I went, that spiritual voice
Haunted me sweetly as a holy dream,
And wove within my mind the secret wish
Even like him to be a Solitary ;
To know the truths which live and work unseen
Thro' outward seeming :—

Till at last I came

To commune with myself about the man,
To picture in my mind his daily life,
To following absently his inward thoughts ;
And in the solitude that grew upon me,
I framed the semblance of his reveries,
His meditations, his ideas of truth,
His contemplations, and his peaceful end,
As follows :—

First I made his thoughts my own,
Of Life, of Good and Evil, Man, his deeds,
(Calling them his, for they in part so were,)
A meditation :—

‘ How Desire unrul’d
‘ Was the chief cause that dimm’d the human soul ;
‘ Grew out an unseen evil, idol-shaped,
‘ A deity for Man’s worship :—

‘ How the Truth
‘ Of spiritual things lay in the *deed* of faith,
‘ Not in its knowledge ;—only so could Man
‘ Attain to sweeter purity and light,
‘ To understanding of invisible law
‘ Of personal growth and beauty :—

‘ How that Man,
‘ Sick to infirmity with thoughts of things,
‘ Himself had dimm’d his vision of the truth,
‘ Foregoing practice for the sweets of mind,
‘ The deed of knowledge for the wonder of it ;

‘ So drawn a closer veil around the soul,
‘ Martyr’d himself in owning the assent
‘ The requisition :—

‘ That herein arose
‘ Man’s chief unhappiness ;—observe the child
‘ Know but to act, or knowing were but void ;—
‘ Man so was made to know, that he might act ;
‘ So onward thro’ his due development
‘ Attain to kindred growth and happiness,
‘ To correspondent purity and joy ;
‘ By virtue of the knowledge in the deed
‘ *Practised*,—so made the substance of himself,
‘ The child again so living in the Man.

‘ Nay more, that every Life in every Age,
‘ Holding within itself potential power
‘ For exercise in each one’s several sphere—
‘ Was born to live, enjoy, and fructify
‘ The proceeds of such nature ; but that Man,
‘ Led by unruled desire, with hope for things
‘ Without his true ordainment, daily grew

‘ Falsely, inordinate, eccentrical
‘ From his own sphere ; so marring his own good,
‘ Profit of life, and honour unto God ;
‘ Making himself a sore unto himself,
‘ Woe in his veins, and evil in the world.

‘ For Man was gifted with a power to know,
‘ To find and recognize his nature’s own,
‘ To live within the sweet potential truth
‘ Of his own inbeing,—that in which his God,
—‘ For purpose beautiful in its design,
‘ And hidden law that open’d every day
‘ A clearer and a holier excellence,—
‘ Had moulded him : no creature of the earth
‘ Came from the womb of nature to unfold
‘ A fore-ordained evil on the world ;
‘ But that the progress of the sense of sin,
‘ (Saving that impulse each inherited,)
‘ Lay in the fashioning of Man himself,
‘ In his own *practice* ; out of which arose
‘ His knowledge,—all the knowledge this alone
‘ True of its kind, and salt upon the earth.

‘ Wherefore within each generation lay
‘ The fact and faculty of its own share
‘ Of human infelicity or joy ;
‘ Saving that loss which it inherited
‘ From foregone shame : that foregone evil wrought,
‘ Tho’ sown upon Man’s nature a disease,
‘ Yet thro’ the power of Man’s intelligence,
‘ His action, his self-rule, his ordinance,
‘ And spiritual labour, might be overthrown,
‘ Trodden beneath his feet, and left behind
‘ To moulder from its evil into good.

‘ For tho’ Man’s being here was but a pain,
‘ A passage, and a waiting, and a fear,
‘ Yet in his present self, as from the first,
‘ Was that divine immortal quality
‘ Which gave him power o’er every living thing
‘ Of God created : Wherefore, since his fall,
‘ His glory and his greatness and his good
‘ Stood in the conquest of his circumstance,
‘ The outward and the inward that arose
‘ To test,—disputing his divinity,

‘ Written within the conscience of the soul.’

And in a quiet hour, he let his mind
Feel thro’ the written ages of the world,
For fact of Man’s first fall—the mode of sin—
And wrote it out, down to this present time,
As follows ; for he held the rhythm true.

‘ Man at the first was law unto himself ;
‘ Gifted with power to realize all truth
‘ In Nature, and discern the ways of God
‘ Towards him, and His purpose ; with one law
‘ To prove his fealty, ‘ Thou shalt not,’ which left
‘ His will unbound to range the infinite,
‘ To gather daily of the fruits of thought
‘ From out creation round. Till Man himself,
‘ Either by instinct of temptation born
‘ Without his will, or wrong desire within,
‘ Unruled of reason—Conscience his sole guide—
‘ Did mis-act to that conscience, and so fell
‘ Away from his clear vision of the truth,
‘ Drawing a veil before the soul which hid

‘ Perception of reality, and so caused
‘ His loss and sequent pain. When ages pass’d
‘ Dim with a thickening evil, that outspread
‘ Its arms to grasp all life into itself,
‘ To mould the fashion of the world away
‘ To its own sense and liking. Till One arose,
‘ From out the race that after bore the Christ—
‘ Strong in the will ; who ever strove to gain
‘ Again pure fact of truth, and daily wrought
‘ God-wards in every effort—who obtain’d
‘ Light above those around, so now gave laws,
‘ Such as before, ‘ Thou shalt not,’ which obtain’d
‘ Man’s proof and fealty, yet left the will
‘ Free as of old to range the infinite,
‘ To know and to recover its pure power
‘ Of life original. From whom did Man,
‘ By contact with his fallibility—
‘ Again fall off, doubting, and disbelieve,
‘ Turning his vision downwards to the earth,
‘ Asking for guidance from a human king,
‘ One as himself,—again quit Conscience’ rule—
‘ Content to read the infinite within

‘ The finite knowledge. When arose the laws
‘ Human—that grew, outspread, and wrought their own
‘ Sequence of limitation—yearly drew
‘ Closer around the soul—inwove the sense
‘ Of free anticipation into fear—
‘ Darken’d the heart’s conception—folded up
‘ One code of fallible complexity,
‘ Self-controverting, self-disproving, dumb,
‘ Speechless of fact of life,—till it became
‘ Incomprehensible and meaningless
‘ Even to Man himself, now lost again
‘ In his own wisdom. When arose the Christ,
‘ To break the spell of ages, certify
‘ Once more Man’s nature of divinity—
‘ The order of the soul in upward growth
‘ Towards its re-completion. But once more,
‘ Fiction to combat ever glorious Fact—
‘ Came the dark vision of a human trust
‘ Born of self’s knowledge,—from the infinite
‘ Drawing the soul away to finite rule,
‘ Teach the Law-in-life for Life-in-law—
‘ The understanding of the human soul

‘ Beneath the power of reason. When again
‘ Sprang the old limitations—finelier drew
‘ Yearly around the soul—inwove the sense
‘ Of faith’s anticipations into form—
‘ Palsied the mind’s perception—folded up
‘ One code of mystical complexity,
‘ Self-introverting, self-confounding, dumb,
‘ Voiceless of truth of life,—till it became
‘ Monstrous and faluten to Man himself,
‘ (Pontifical infallibility)
‘ And insubstantial folly. When poor Man,
‘ Lost wholly to the present—turn’d again
‘ To read the truth in Nature, spell himself
‘ Once more out from himself, and strove to find
‘ Fact from the inward—for the infinite
‘ Yearning as ever, as he first was made
‘ To act, believe, and worship.’

For before,

Self-questioning, he had discern’d the truth,
The constitution of a human life,
The living self:—

——‘ The nature of a Man ?

‘ Conscience, was it the speech of the divine
 ‘ Element within him ? were the kindred words
 ‘ Conscience and Soul synonymous ? And as the Body
 ‘ Grew and develop’d, did the knowledge gain’d
 ‘ Of Conscience but express its kindred growth
 ‘ Of Soul-development ? But speech of Soul
 ‘ Was intuition : Conscience was direction :—
 ‘ Conscience but led, originated none.
 ‘ Speech of three kinds existed in a Man :
 ‘ Speech of the Soul, of Reason, and of Sense.
 ‘ Was Conscience then the arbiter between
 ‘ These three ? the one infallible guide
 ‘ To right in each occasion ? the sole I,
 ‘ The personal self, the Ego in a man ?—
 ‘ I am, I know, by that within myself
 ‘ I am directed ; *this* then was Myself.

‘ Yet but Myself in Law, for Life and Law
 ‘ Were two ; my Life was that I *am*,
 ‘ Not Law alone.—Was Conscience then *but* Law,
 ‘ Law to the human life infallible,
 The expression of the consciousness of Soul,

‘ That power within which lives and contemplates
‘ My unity; and which, possessing not
‘ Superior power, I cannot comprehend?—

‘ Divisions in faith, had they their origin
‘ In *partial* exercise of sympathy
‘ Born in each life? the expression of the rest
‘ Being negatived by ignorance or fear?
‘ Or did the several and co-equal powers
‘ Existing in the unity of Man
‘ Work in disunion?—Sensuous from Mind,
‘ Mind from the Soul, the Soul from Sensuous?
‘ And so originate the various faiths
‘ Distracting all?—

‘ Were different beliefs
‘ Foster’d in part by fact of difference
‘ In *human* nature? Did material law
‘ Shape or affect law spiritual? And whereas
‘ Man was a creature of two natures form’d
‘ One by a third, did the preponderance
‘ Of quality in each nature regulate

‘ The nature of his sense of spiritual things ? ’—

For one day sitting, as he often sat,
 In silent meditation, seeking truth ;
 Reviewing earnestly beliefs of men,
 The Christless super-egotism of the soul—
 The mirage of a brain-born phantasy—
 The low and carnal cold indifference—
 And all those million-fancies that absorb
 A little self-made image of God’s truth ;
 Suddenly came new light, that show’d within
 Three principles distinct in unity :
 Man so made after God,—he ask’d himself,
 ‘ Can Love make Reason, Reason dissolve Love,
 ‘ Or can this Body’s self either destroy,
 ‘ By either be destroy’d ?—Was *this* the truth
 ‘ Of the divine fiat original,
 ‘ *LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE ?* ’

For God is Love ; emotion of all things ;
 Joy of the morning ; song of folding eve ;

Breath of the angel ; and the mother's kiss.

Spirit is Reason ; Man's intelligence ;
Knowledge of all things ; wonder of his being ;
King o'er the creature ; and the law of Truth.

Body is Christ ; the perfectness of Man ;
Glory of inward and of outward life ;
Type of the future ; unity of all :
The Three in One made visible on earth.

* * *

When, with this wonder-conception overcome,
This intuition of man's parent-birth—
Rapt from the present, caught up in the soul,
Lovingly in its light he framed a creed,
One faith for all, one hope, one complete love ;
And read a coming change in Man's belief,
With happier times ; gentler and nobler lives ;
And worthier aims ; truth-purified desires :—
Faith and true Knowledge blended into one,
Peace between Heart and Mind for evermore.

* * *

Till on the morrow, at the usual hour,
She, the old crone who dajly bore his bread,
Came—lo, the first ray of the morning sun
Fell on the white face of an absent life,
And peace lay silently upon the dead.

MISCELLANEOUS.



IMAGINATION.



IMAGINATION is a single star
In the mind's heaven, that unpeopled
With a pure, high-bred, noble race of thoughts,
Unhusbanded, grows rank abortion, soon
Consumes itself.

THE POET'S MIND.



THE Poet's Mind mirrors a sleepless sea
Whose limit, power, and depth are undefined ;
Whose shores fluctuate with the ebb and flow
Of every impulse, each successively
Leaving its own impression ere it pass.
And as the Sun in heaven, faithfully,
Tints every ripple with a separate hue,
Giving to each a life, identity,
Form, shade, expression, everything its own ;
So with the Poet ; everything that moves,
Or rests, above, below, in earth or sky,
Seen by Imagination's vivid light,
Hath colour, calling, history its own,
Mysterious, true, and beautiful.



MIND AND NATURE.



NATURE is

The spouse of Mind ; verily are they one,
Made conjugal by that power above each—
In love.

L I F E.



LIFE was not made for Law but Law for Life :
Hence Law's Life's servant ; and in truth, whereas,
Tho' Nature change not, Life doth ever change,
Evolvè some new inherence, bring to birth
Some new relationship of the divine
Qualities which make it ; Law must ever change,
And shape itself to each necessity.

L A W.



LAW is the eye of light as Life's the light :
Hence Life less Law were blind light, could not be ;
And, as the manner and the form of things
Known to the reason, soul, or bodily eye,
Appear alone thro' Law, are bodied forth
But by Law's property ; Law is the means
And order of all Life ; no Law being none.



EARLIER VERSE.



A FAVOURITE ORNAMENT.

(Written in a Lady's Album.)



A SMILE ! what can I name more beautiful ?
So bright, that thro' its brilliancy the sun
Would appear pale, and shun comparison.
And *so* sweet, that a little infant child
Would look and laugh, and laugh and look again,
And rivet there its innocent sweet gaze.
So innocent, that e'en the Dove would strive
To nestle closer to it than its mate ;
And merry, that the laughing stars would say,
Come, join us in our happy symphony.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

(Gal. v. 22—24)



Love that worketh ill to no one,

Is to all alike sincere,

For each pulse of joy or sorrow

Hath a sympathetic tear.

Joy to know that when hereafter

Comes the perfect day of rest,

The last long triumphant sounding

Will re-echo from the breast.

PEACE that knows no more of anger

Than the tenant of the grave ;

Like the solemn calm at even ;

Or the burden of a wave.

LONGSUFFERING and o'ercoming

In the daily inward strife ;

With a soldier's strength enduring

'Thro' the careworn vale of life.

GENTLENESS the simple fashion

Of an unassuming soul,

Holding every wrong emotion

Safely underneath control.

GOODNESS ever daily bearing,

Dewlike, over flower and tree,

From the heart's o'erflowing fountain

Charity's sweet sympathy.

FAITH resembling our Redeemer's

Overcoming Satan's lore ;

Thro' earth's lessening mists discerning

Shadows of the long'd-for shore.

MEEKNESS ever unrepining,

Alway to His will resign'd ;

Softly patient and forbearing,

Hope in lowliness of mind.

TEMPERANCE for aye evading

Aught that would impair the soul ;

Vigilantly exercising

Patient, earnest self-control.

M I D N I G H T.



IN the soft stillness of the midnight air
Live sweet harmonious sounds ;
I listen'd to those melodies so rare
In which the night abounds.

I heard the solemn anthem from on high
Borne on the midnight air ;
Those voices numberless in harmony
Chanting their praises there——

I saw those sentinels in heaven's high dome
Keeping repose with love ;
And the true watchword to my soul came home
Which they spoke from above.

Sweet Philomel I heard with rapture lend

Her beautiful rich stave ;

And its full echo up the vale ascend

From some deep listening cave.

I saw the River in its secret might

Winding the meads among ;

And thro' the peaceful chambers of the night

Pass silently along——

Its bosom kindled with the heavenly light,

Glittering wide and far ;

Its dotted margin sparkling on the sight

With glowworm's earth-born star.

I heard the old Day, once so young and hale,

Whisper her last good-bye ;

And wafted on the sympathising gale

Came her faint parting sigh.

Then all was still ; and on the failing sight

Those phantom visions waned ;

While thro' the vaulted regions of the Night,

Deathlike, deep Silence reigned.

ON THE BANKS OF THE AVON.



I LAY beside the River

In solitary ease,

And gazed upon its placid brow

Fann'd by the evening breeze ;

The parting sun had gain'd the west—

The moon had mounted high—

The twilight's shade came on apace

As I lay the River by ;

My little dog among the reeds

Peer'd stealthily about,

Hoping the wary water-rat

To find not looking out ;

And then he ran a merry round

Over the meadow green,

To think that though he had not one

Right many had he seen ;

And then he lay down by my side

And peer'd into my face,

The absent thoughts that fill'd my brain

Endeavouring to trace.

For while I lay by the River's side

I thought it seem'd to say ;—

‘ Why dost thou not, like me, pursue

‘ The purpose of thy way ;

‘ Beside my path are pleasant scenes

‘ That tempt me to delay ;

‘ I heed them not, their love I know

‘ Lives only to decay ;

‘ Though many wills oppose my way,

‘ Though many storms contend,

‘ With ceaseless flow, I onward pass

‘ Toward my mighty end.’

‘ O River ! I will try like thee,’
I thankfully replied,
‘ With steadier force to wend my way
‘ Whatever may betide.’

And, as I homeward went that night,
Musing in better thought,
I thanked the friendly River for
The lesson it had taught.

REVERIE.

(Written in the Home of Childhood.)



CONTENT once more I dwell upon that spot
Which my blest infancy and childhood knew ;
Where God did will my early happy lot,
And shadows on my pathway never grew.

Yes, years have roll'd ! and on Time's fleeting wings
My boyhood's days have flown for evermore ;
Now, Duty calls me, yet her presence brings
Peace to my hearth, Contentment to my door.

Tho' fair the present, yet those earlier scenes
To trace in lonely thought I oft prefer ;
I love to live them o'er in silent dreams,
How brightly do they to my mind recur !

Here first I learnt, taught by a Mother's love,
Of him who made me, keeps me in His care ;
And here with hands upraised to God above,
My infant lips first breathed their little prayer.

Familiar faces often do I meet
Who shared with me the ball and merry round,
Now graved with care, me differently they greet,
No more their comrade in the stolen ground.

Oft here in glee we wove the daisy chain,
Oft blew the fairy bubbles thro' the air,
How like were they Thought's visionary train
By Childhood's fancy imaged faint and fair !

But let me not to fond regrets resign,
To Retrospection lend *too* willing ear,
Bright smiles the present ! should I then repine,
Or consecrate the past with living tear ?

No,—there are flowers *still* blossoming around,
Tho' weeds have sprung that check their *full* display ;
Then be it mine to cultivate the ground,
And 'mid confusion seek each beauteous trait.

Sweet is the morning in its sparkling pride,
Sweet are the melodies that greet the ear,
The roseate hue of health blooms far and wide,
And Nature smiles as in her first-born year.

The ploughboy's whistle rings along the vale,
The lark uprising fascinates the skies,
The milkmaid's matin flows beneath the pail,
As tripping sprightly to her task she hies.

I love to trace the well-remember'd hill
That shields the hamlet from the eastern blast,
Its tender recollections strangely fill
My ardent soul with pleasures of the past.

I love to hear the village chapel bell
Make solemn mention of the sabbath prayer,
But better far with heart and soul to swell
The heaven-bound harmony resounding there.

No festive concourse that to sin gives birth,
Nor voice of vanity, nor loud display,
No proud procession, or unhallow'd mirth
Break the soft silence of the Sabbath day.

The lay of birds, the soothing whispering breeze,
The humming of the seven-day busy bee,
The peasant strolling at his welcome ease,
Alone disturb its sacred melody.

Here may I rest,—and with a studious care
Attend the calling God hath me assign'd ;
Hoarding spare moments that they *all* may bear
Some little Knowledge to an ill-stored mind.



TWILIGHT.

I LEFT the busy world, its weary sound,

Its intermittent moan ;

And in a solitary woodland found

Rest, with my thoughts alone.

Nor sigh nor sorrow knew this happy spot,

Here Peace was Nature's pride ;

Love reign'd supreme o'er all—the common lot—

With Joy his smiling bride.

I heard a sound of lulling music sweet

Sung by a Choir of rills,

And sweeter yet its echoings repeat

Back from the listening hills ;

And all the harmony the woodlands raise,
When Twilight's pensive ray
Calls forth their grateful vesper-song of praise
That Man forgets to pay.

But these will cease ; the aching heart desires
Those deathless sounds to hear,
Born not of this vex'd earth, and thence aspires
Beyond this mortal sphere—

Alone, Imagination loves to part
Free from this world's control,
To hear those sounds Faith whispers in the heart,
And Hope claims for the soul ;

Voices that fill the air from worlds unknown,
The Hymns of saints that rest,
The song of triumph round the golden throne,
The footfalls of the blest.

And I heard sounds of many passing wings,
Some seraph embassy,
And harp-strings making their sweet offerings,
And vocal melody ;

And listening raptured still, I seem'd to hear
Another Angel's lyre
Call them within heaven's portals to appear,
And join the glorious Choir.

And ere they closed, a gleam of heavenly light
Shot thro' my mortal frame,
Fill'd my whole soul with exquisite delight
Beyond all power to name—

I long'd to quit this dust, and thro' Heaven's gates
With those blest ones to fly ;
Come Death ! I fear thee not, my Spirit waits
For real life on High.

THE END.

N O T E.

It was the original intention of the Author to occupy Part III. of *The Hermit* with the personal history of the hero, and so conclude the poem with the thoughts, feelings and experiences of utter solitude and old age. But upon trial he found this too difficult, and relinquished the attempt.







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